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THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

EUGÉNIE GRANDET

URSULE MIROUËT

AND OTHER STORIES

Eugenie ran over to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

(*Eugenie Grandet*, page 64)

With introductions by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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(Translators, CLARA BELL AND JAMES WARING)

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EUGÉNIE GRANDET

AND OTHER STORIES

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INTRODUCTION

WITH *Eugénie Grandet* as with one or two, but only one or two, others of Balzac's works, we come to a case of *Quis vituperavit?* Here, and perhaps here only, with *Le Médecin de Campagne* and *Le Père Goriot,* though there may be carpers and depreciators, there are no open deniers of the merit of the work. The pathos of Eugénie, the mastery of Grandet, the success of the minor characters, especially Nanon, are universally recognized. The importance of the work has sometimes been slightly questioned even by those who admit its beauty: but this questioning can only support itself on the unavowed but frequently present conviction or suspicion that a "good" or "goody" book must be a weak one. As a matter of fact, no book can be, or can be asked to be, better than perfect on its own scheme, and with its own conditions. And on its own scheme and with its own conditions *Eugénie Grandet* is very nearly perfect.

On the character of the heroine will turn the final decision whether, as has been said by some (I believe I might be charged with having said it myself), Balzac's virtuous characters are always more theatrical than real. The decision must take in the Benassis of *Le Médecin de Campagne,* but with him it will have less difficulty; for Benassis, despite the beauty and pathos of his confession, is a little "a person of the boards" in his unfailingly providential character and his complete devotion to others. Must Eugénie, his feminine companion in goodness, be put on these boards likewise?

I admit that of late years, and more particularly since the undertaking of this present task made necessary to me a more

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complete and methodical study of the whole works, including the most miscellaneous miscellanies, than I had previously given, my estimate of Balzac's goodness has gone up very much—that of his greatness had no need of rising. But I still think that even about Eugénie there is a very little unreality, a slight touch of that ignorance of the actual nature of girls which even fervent admirers of French novelists in general, and of Balzac in particular, have confessed to finding in them and him. That Eugénie should be entirely subjugated first by the splendor, and then by the misfortune, of her Parisian cousin, is not in the least unnatural; nor do I for one moment pretend to deny the possibility or the likelihood of her having

> lifted up her eyes,
> And loved him with that love which was her doom.

It is also difficult to make too much allowance for the fatal effect of an education under an insignificant if amiable mother and a tyrannical father, and of a confinement to an excessively small circle of extremely provincial society, on a disposition of more nobility than intellectual height or range. Still it must, I think, be permitted to the *advocatus diaboli* to urge that Eugénie's martyrdom is almost too thorough; that though complete, it is not, as Gautier said of his own ill luck, "*artistement* complet;" that though it may be difficult to put the finger on any special blot, to say, "Here the girl should have revolted," or "Here she would have behaved in some other way differently;" still there is a vague sense of incomplete lifelikeness—of that tendency to mirage and exaggeration which has been, and will be, so often noticed.

Still it is vague and not unpleasantly obtrusive, and in all other ways Eugénie is a triumph. It is noticeable that her

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creator has dwelt on the actual traits of her face with much more distinctness than is usual with him; for Balzac's extraordinary minuteness in many ways does not invariably extend to physical charms. This minuteness is indeed so great that one has a certain suspicion of the head being taken from a live and special original. Nor is her physical presence —abominably libeled, there is no doubt, by Mme. des Grassins—the only distinct thing about Eugénie. We see her hovering about the *beau cousin* with an innocent officiousness capable of committing no less the major crime of lending him money than the minor, but even more audacious, because open, one of letting him have sugar. She is perfectly natural in the courage with which she bears her father's unjust rage, and in the forgiveness which, quite as a matter of course, she extends to him after he has broken her own peace and her mother's heart. It is perhaps necessary to be French to comprehend entirely why she could not heap that magnificent pile of coals of fire on her unworthy cousin's head without flinging herself and her seventeen millions into the arms of somebody else; but the thing can be accepted if not quite understood. And the whole transaction of this heaping is admirable.

If the criticism be not thought something of a supersubtlety, it may perhaps be suggested that the inferiority which has generally been acknowledged in the lover is a confession or indication that there is something very slightly wrong with the scheme of Eugénie herself—that if she had been absolutely natural, it would not have been necessary to make Charles not merely a thankless brute, but a heedless fool. However great a scoundrel the ex-slave-trader may have been (and as presented to us earlier he does not seem so much

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scoundrelly as shallow), his respectable occupation must have made him a smart man of business; and as such, before burning his boats by such a letter as he writes, he might surely have found out how the land lay. But this does not matter much.

Nanon is, of course, quite excellent. She is not stupid, as her kind are supposed to be; she is only blindly faithful, as well as thoroughly good-hearted. Nor is the unfortunate Madame Grandet an idiot, nor are any of the *comparses* mere dummies. But naturally they all, even Eugénie herself to some extent, serve mainly as sets-off to the terrible Grandet. In him Balzac, a Frenchman of Frenchmen, has boldly depicted perhaps the worst and the commonest vice of the French character, the vice which is more common, and certainly worse than either the frivolity or the license with which the nation is usually charged—the pushing, to wit, of thrift to the loathsome excess of an inhuman avarice. But he has justified himself to his country by communicating to his hero an unquestioned grandeur. The mirage works again, but it works with splendid effect. One need not be a sentimentalist to shudder a little at the *ta ta ta ta* of Grandet, the refrain of a money-grubbing which almost escapes greediness by its diabolical extravagance and success.

The bibliography of *Eugénie Grandet* is not complicated. Balzac tried the first chapter (there were originally seven) in *L'Europe Littéraire* for September 19, 1833; but he did not continue it there, and it appeared complete in the first volume of *Scènes de la Vie de Province* next year. Charpentier republished it in a single volume in 1839. The *Comédie* engulfed it in 1843, the chapter divisions then disappearing.

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There is a good deal of inequality in the shorter stories appended in this volume, since they contain work conceived in very different manners and executed at very different times.

The story which used to come first, *La Paix du Ménage*, is scarcely worthy of precedence, save as eldest. It belongs to the time when Balzac, though he had found his way, was not yet walking surely in it; and besides, it belongs to a class of work which, though he continued to practise in it almost to the end, never was his happiest class. The attraction which these stories of family broils and rearrangements in "high life" had for Balzac must always be rather inexplicable, except to those who are complaisant enough to allow him the knowledge of that high life which, though constantly contested by some of the best authorities, though more than dubious to impartial critics, is a sort of religion to extreme Balzacians. In this particular case, too, the intrigue is of scanty interest, and requires a lighter and more airy handling than Balzac could often—perhaps than he could ever—give. The fact is that he was too conscientious for this sort of thing, which in the hands of "Gyp" would have been as thoroughly at home as it is out of place in his.

La Fausse Maîtresse is of very different value. It may indeed be called somewhat fantastic, and the final trait, whether false or not to nature, will provoke some critics. But the devotion of Paz is exactly one of those things which suited Balzac best, and which he could handle most effectively. And perhaps the irony is not too severe, though it represents his idol, after having been the object of such a love as his, on the point of surrendering to a worthless *poseur* like La Palférine, whom, it may be observed in passing, Balzac never

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brings on the scene except with the result, whether by deliberate purpose or not, of dealing a covert blow at the weakness of women and their proneness to low ideals. It ought, however, to be said in fairness that he seems to have had a sort of admiration for this raff of a Rusticoli himself. Clémentine, despite her lack of steadiness, is not one of his most iconoclastic sketches; and Laginski, though somewhat doubling the notion of Polish foibles—afterwards again conveyed in Wenceslas Steinbock, and whether from this cause or some other established to the present day as a tradition in France—has distinct merits and attractions.

The two *Études de femme,* to which *La Grande Bretêche* is an appendix, rise gradually from an ordinary to an extraordinary level. The adventure of Madame de Listomère and Rastignac is slight but good; and one rather wishes that Balzac had oftener confined sketches of the sort to limits so suitable for a sketch. The false prude comes out with remarkable success; and if Rastignac does not cut so good a figure in point of cleverness as in some others of his numerous appearances, he is more natural than in some of them.

The stories of the *Autre Étude* are called in the *Répertoire* of MM. Christophe and Cerfberr *"d'exquises causeries."* It is not certain that all readers will acquiesce in this epithet, which is used several times in the piece by Balzac himself, though I do not remember that the combination of it with *causerie* is textual. In the first place, the discourses of Marsay and Blondet might be called by unfriendly critics rather sermons than *causeries.* In the second, though Marsay is rather less of a "tiger" than in some of his other performances, the coxcombry of the exhibition exceeds its charm, while Blondet's discussion of womankind has the unreality of

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all these discussions. Montriveau's story is considerably better than either of these; and it leads up very well to *La Grande Bretêche.*

This latter is one of the best known of Balzac's short stories, and may rank among the half-dozen best of all. Contrary to a habit which, though not invariable, is too common with him, he is not long in "getting under way," and he does not waste a single stroke in drawing the actual catastrophe. Bianchon, who generally has a good part assigned him, is here unusually lucky. Indeed, the piece is so short and so good, that critical dwelling on it is almost an impertinence.

It should, perhaps, be observed that Mademoiselle des Touches, the hostess at whose table three of the stories of this volume were told, and who figures elsewhere, especially in *Béatrix,* is one of the not very numerous personages of the *Comédie* who are undoubtedly drawn from a distinguished living original—in this case George Sand. I must refer to the Introduction to *Béatrix* itself for more about her, it being desirable not to "double" in these short prefaces.

La Paix du Ménage formed part of the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* from their first appearance in 1830, and entered with the rest into the *Comédie.* Then, and then only, was the dedication to Valentine Surville, Balzac's niece, added. At this latter period *La Fausse Maîtresse* made its first appearance in the same division, having been just before (December 1841) printed serially in the *Siècle* with five chapters, while in the first volume issue it had ten. The first *Étude de femme* came out in *La Mode* in March 1830, next year at the end of the *Peau de Chagrin,* in 1835 (with a new title, *Profil de Marquise*) in the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne,* and when the

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Comédie was collected, in its actual position and with its actual title. The bibliography of the next two stories is so complicated that it occupies fourteen of M. de Lovenjoul's pages, and that I despair of presenting any acceptable abstract of it in a small space. Balzac seems to have reserved them for the most exemplary victims of his mania for rehandling. He changed their titles; he took from them and inserted in them passages and episodes afterwards removed elsewhere or omitted altogether; he published them in a dozen different places, connections, and forms.

G. S.

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EUGÉNIE GRANDET

To Maria.

Your portrait is the fairest ornament of this book, and here it is fitting that your name should be set, like the branch of box taken from some unknown garden to lie for a while in the holy water, and afterwards set by pious hands above the threshold, where the green spray, ever renewed, is a sacred talisman to ward off all evil from the house.

In some country towns there are houses more depressing to the sight than the dimmest cloister, the most melancholy ruins, or the dreariest stretch of sandy waste. Perhaps such houses as these combine the characteristics of all the three, and to the dumb silence of the monastery they unite the gauntness and grimness of the ruin, and the arid desolation of the waste. So little sign is there of life or of movement about them, that a stranger might take them for uninhabited dwellings; but the sound of an unfamiliar footstep brings some one to the window, a passive face suddenly appears above the sill, and the traveler receives a listless and indifferent glance—it is almost as if a monk leaned out to look for a moment on the world.

There is one particular house front in Saumur which possesses all these melancholy characteristics; the house is still standing at the end of the steep street which leads to the castle, at the upper end of the town. The street is very quiet nowadays; it is hot in summer and cold in winter, and very dark in places; besides this, it is remarkably narrow and crooked, there is a peculiarly formal and sedate air about its houses,

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and it is curious how every sound reverberates through it—the cobble stones (always clean and dry) ring with every passing footfall.

This is the oldest part of the town, the ramparts rise immediately above it. The houses of the quarter have stood for three centuries; and albeit they are built of wood, they are strong and sound yet. Each house has a certain character of its own, so that for the artist and antiquary this is the most attractive part of the town of Saumur. Indeed, it would hardly be possible to go past the house without a wondering glance at the grotesque figures carved on the projecting ends of the huge beams, set like a black bas-relief above the ground floor of almost every dwelling. Sometimes, where these beams have been protected from the weather by slates, a strip of dull blue runs across the crumbling walls, and crowning the whole is a high-pitched roof oddly curved and bent with age; the shingle boards that cover it are all warped and twisted by the alternate sun and rain of many a year. There are bits of delicate carving too, here and there, though you can scarcely make them out, on the worn and blackened window sills that seem scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of the red flower-pot in which some poor workwoman has set her tree carnation or her monthly rose.

Still further along the street there are more pretentious house doors studded with huge nails. On these our forefathers exercised their ingenuity, tracing hieroglyphs and mysterious signs which were once understood in every household, but all clues to their meaning are forgotten now—they will be understood no more of any mortal. In such wise would a Protestant make his profession of faith, there also would a Leaguer curse Henry IV. in graven symbols. A burgher would commemorate his civic dignities, the glory of his long-forgotten tenure of office as alderman or sheriff. On those old houses, if we could but read it, the history of France is chronicled.

Beside the rickety little tenement built of wood with masonry of the roughest, upon the wall of which the craftsman

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has set the glorified image of his trade—his plane—stands the mansion of some noble, with its massive round arched gateway; you can still see some traces above it of the arms borne by the owner, though they have been torn down in one of the many revolutions which have convulsed the country since 1789.

You will find no imposing shop windows in the streets; strictly speaking indeed, there are no shops at all, for the rooms on the ground floor in which articles are exposed for sale are neither more nor less than the workshops of the times of our forefathers; lovers of the Middle Ages will find here the primitive simplicity of an older world. The low-ceiled rooms are dark, cavernous, and guiltless alike of plate glass windows or of show cases; there is no attempt at decoration either within or without, no effort is made to display the wares. The door as a rule is heavily barred with iron and divided into two parts; the upper half is thrown back during the day, admitting fresh air and daylight into the damp little cave; while the lower portion, to which a bell is attached, is seldom still. The shop front consists of a low wall of about elbow height, which fills half the space between floor and ceiling; there is no window sash, but heavy shutters fastened with iron bolts fit into a groove in the top of the wall, and are set up at night and taken down in the morning. The same wall serves as a counter on which to set out goods for the customer's inspection. There is no sort of charlatanism about the proceeding. The samples submitted to the public vary according to the nature of the trade. You behold a keg or two of salt or of salted fish, two or three bales of sailcloth or coils of rope, some copper wire hanging from the rafters, a few cooper's hoops on the walls, or a length or two of cloth upon the shelves.

You go in. A neat and tidy damsel with a pair of bare red arms, the fresh good looks of youth, and a white handkerchief pinned about her throat, lays down her knitting and goes to summon a father or mother, who appears and sells goods to you as you desire, be it a matter of two sous or of

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twenty thousand francs; the manner of the transaction varying as the humor of the vendor is surly, obliging or independent. You will see a dealer in barrel-staves sitting in his doorway, twirling his thumbs as he chats with a neighbor; judging from appearances, he might possess nothing in this world but the bottles on his few rickety shelves, and two or three bundles of laths; but his well-stocked timber yard on the quay supplies all the coopers in Anjou, he knows to a barrel-stave how many casks he can "turn out," as he says, if the vines do well and the vintage is good; a few scorching days and his fortune is made, a rainy summer is a ruinous thing for him; in a single morning the price of puncheons will rise as high as eleven francs or drop to six.

Here, as in Touraine, the whole trade of the district depends upon an atmospherical depression. Landowners, vine-growers, timber merchants, coopers, innkeepers, and lightermen, one and all are on the watch for a ray of sunlight. Not a man of them but goes to bed in fear and trembling lest he should hear in the morning that there has been a frost in the night. If it is not rain that they dread, it is wind or drought; they must have cloudy weather or heat, and the rainfall and the weather generally all arranged to suit their peculiar notions.

Between the clerk of the weather and the vine-growing interest there is a duel which never ceases. Faces visibly lengthen or shorten, grow bright or gloomy, with the ups and downs of the barometer. Sometimes you hear from one end to the other of the old High Street of Saumur the words, "This is golden weather!" or again, in language which likewise is no mere figure of speech, "It is raining gold louis!" and they all know the exact value of sun or rain at the right moment.

After twelve o'clock or so on a Saturday in the summer time, you will not do a pennyworth of business among the worthy townsmen of Saumur. Each has his little farm and his bit of vineyard, and goes to spend the "week end" in the country. As everybody knows this beforehand, just as every-

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body knows everybody else's business, his goings and comings, his buyings and sellings, and profits to boot, the good folk are free to spend ten hours out of the twelve in making up pleasant little parties, in taking notes and making comments and keeping sharp look-out on their neighbors' affairs. The mistress of a house cannot buy a partridge but the neighbors will inquire of her husband whether the bird was done to a turn; no damsel can put her head out of the window without being observed by every group of unoccupied observers.

Impenetrable, dark, and silent as the houses may seem, they contain no mysteries hidden from public scrutiny, and in the same way every one knows what is passing in every one else's mind. To begin with, the good folk spend most of their lives out of doors, they sit on the steps of their houses, breakfast there and dine there, and adjust any little family differences in the doorway. Every passer-by is scanned with the most minute and diligent attention; hence, any stranger who may happen to arrive in such a country town has, in a manner, to run the gauntlet, and is severely quizzed from every doorstep. By dint of perseverance in the methods thus indicated a quantity of droll stories may be collected; and, indeed, the people of Angers, who are of an ingenious turn, and quick at repartee, have been nicknamed "the tattlers" on these very grounds.

The largest houses of the old quarter in which the nobles once dwelt are all at the upper end of the street, and in one of these the events took place which are about to be narrated in the course of this story. As has been already said, it was a melancholy house, a venerable relic of a bygone age, built for the men and women of an older and simpler world, from which our modern France is further and further removed day by day. After you have followed for some distance the windings of the picturesque street, where memories of the past are called up by every detail at every turn, till at length you fall unconsciously to musing, you come upon a sufficiently gloomy recess in which a doorway is dimly visible,

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the door of *M. Grandet's house.* Of all the pride and glory of proprietorship conveyed to the provincial mind by those three words, it is impossible to give any idea, except by giving the biography of the owner—M. Grandet.

M. Grandet enjoyed a certain reputation in Saumur. Its causes and effects can scarcely be properly estimated by outsiders who have not lived in a country town for a longer or shorter time. There were still old people in existence who could remember former times, and called M. Grandet "Goodman Grandet," but there were not many of them left, and they were rapidly disappearing year by year.

In 1789 Grandet was a master cooper, in a very good way of business, who could read and write and cast accounts. When the French Republic, having confiscated the lands of the Church in the district of Saumur, proceeded to sell them by auction, the cooper was forty years of age, and had just married the daughter of a wealthy timber merchant. As Grandet possessed at that moment his wife's dowry as well as some considerable amount of ready money of his own, he repaired to the bureau of the *district;* and making due allowance for two hundred double louis offered by his father-in-law to that man of stern morals, the Republican who conducted the sale, the cooper acquired some of the best vineland in the neighborhood, an old abbey, and a few little farms, for an old song, to all of which property, though it might be ill-gotten, the law gave him a clear title.

There was little sympathy felt with the Revolution in Saumur. Goodman Grandet was looked upon as a bold spirit, a Republican, a patriot, an "advanced thinker," and what not; but all the "thinking" the cooper ever did turned simply and solely on the subject of his vines. He was nominated as a member of the administration of the district of Saumur, and exercised a pacific influence both in politics and in commerce. Politically, he befriended the ci-devants, and did all that he could to prevent the sale of their property; commercially, he contracted to supply two thousand hogsheads of white wine to the Republican armies, taking his payment

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for the aforesaid hogsheads in the shape of certain broad acres of rich meadow land belonging to a convent, the property of the nuns having been reserved till the last.

In the days of the Consulate, Master Grandet became mayor; did prudently in his public capacity, and did very well for himself. Times changed, the Empire was established, and he became *Monsieur* Grandet. But M. Grandet had been looked upon as a red Republican, and Napoleon had no liking for Republicans, so the mayor was replaced by a large landowner, a man with a *de* before his name, and a prospect of one day becoming a baron of the Empire. M. Grandet turned his back upon municipal honors without a shadow of regret. He had looked well after the interests of the town during his term of office, excellent roads had been made, passing in every case by his own domains. His house and land had been assessed very moderately, the burden of the taxes did not fall too grievously upon him; since the assessment moreover he had given ceaseless attention and care to the cultivation of his vines, so that they had become the *tête du pays*, the technical term for those vineyards which produce wine of the finest quality. He had a fair claim to the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and he received it in 1806.

By this time M. Grandet was fifty-seven years old, and his wife about thirty-six. The one child of the marriage was a daughter, a little girl ten years of age. Providence doubtless sought to console M. Grandet for his official downfall; for in this year he succeeded to three fortunes; the total value was matter for conjecture, no certain information being forthcoming. The first fell in on the death of Mme. de la Guadinière, Mme. Grandet's mother; the deceased lady had been a de la Bertellière, and her father, old M. de la Bertellière, soon followed her; the third in order was Mme. Gentillet, M. Grandet's grandmother on the mother's side. Old M. de la Bertellière used to call an investment "throwing money away;" the sight of his hoards of gold repaid him better than any rate of interest upon it. The town of Saumur, therefore, roughly calculated the value of the amount that

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the late de la Bertellière was likely to have saved out of his yearly takings; and M. Grandet received a new distinction which none of our manias for equality can efface—he paid more taxes than any one else in the country round.

He now cultivated a hundred acres of vineyard; in a good year they would yield seven or eight hundred puncheons. He had thirteen little farms, an old abbey (motives of economy had led him to wall up the windows, and so preserve the traceries and stained glass), and a hundred and twenty-seven acres of grazing land, in which three thousand poplars, planted in 1793, were growing taller and larger every year. Finally, he owned the house in which he lived.

In these visible ways his prosperity had increased. As to his capital, there were only two people in a position to make a guess at its probable amount. One of these was the notary, M. Cruchot, who transacted all the necessary business whenever M. Grandet made an investment; and the other was M. des Grassins, the wealthiest banker in the town, who did Grandet many good offices which were unknown to Saumur. Secrets of this nature, involving extensive business transactions, are usually well kept; but the discreet caution of MM. Cruchot and des Grassins did not prevent them from addressing M. Grandet in public with such profound deference that close observers might draw their own conclusions. Clearly the wealth of their late mayor must be prodigious indeed that he should receive such obsequious attention.

There was no one in Saumur who did not fully believe the report which told how, in a secret hiding-place, M. Grandet had a hoard of louis, and how every night he went to look at it and gave himself up to the inexpressible delight of gazing at the huge heap of gold. He was not the only money-lover in Saumur. Sympathetic observers looked at his eyes and felt that the story was true, for they seemed to have the yellow metallic glitter of the coin over which it was said they had brooded. Nor was this the only sign. Certain small indefinable habits, furtive movements, slight mysterious promptings of greed did not escape the keen observation of

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fellow-worshipers. There is something vulpine about the eyes of a man who lends money at an exorbitant rate of interest; they gradually and surely contract like those of the gambler, the sensualist, or the courtier; and there is, so to speak, a sort of freemasonry among the passions, a written language of hieroglyphs and signs for those who can read them.

M. Grandet therefore inspired in all around him the respectful esteem which is but the due of a man who has never owed any one a farthing in his life; a just and legitimate tribute to an astute old cooper and vinegrower who knew beforehand with the certainty of an astronomer when five hundred casks would serve for the vintage, and when to have a thousand in readiness; a man who had never lost on any speculation, who had always a stock of empty barrels whenever casks were so dear that they fetched more than the contents were worth; who could store his vintage in his own cellars, and afford to bide his time, so that his puncheons would bring him in a couple of hundred francs, while many a little proprietor who could not wait had to be content with half that amount. His famous vintage in the year 1811 discreetly held, and sold only as good opportunities offered, had been worth two hundred and forty thousand livres to him.

In matters financial M. Grandet might be described as combining the characteristics of the Bengal tiger and the boa constrictor. He could lie low and wait, crouching, watching for his prey, and make his spring, unerringly at last; then the jaws of his purse would unclose, a torrent of coin would be swallowed down, and, as in the case of the gorged reptile, there would be a period of inaction; like the serpent, moreover, he was cold, apathetic, methodical, keeping to his own mysterious times and seasons.

No one could see the man pass without feeling a certain kind of admiration, which was half dread, half respect. The tiger's clutch was like steel, his claws were sharp and swift; was there any one in Saumur who had not felt them? Such an one, for instance, wanted to borrow money to buy that

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piece of land which he had set his heart upon; M. Cruchot had found the money for him—at eleven per cent. And there was So-and-so yonder; M. des Grassins had discounted his bills, but it was at a ruinous rate.

There were not many days when M. Grandet's name did not come up in conversation, in familiar talk in the evenings, or in the gossip of the town. There were people who took a kind of patriotic pride in the old vinegrower's wealth. More than one innkeeper or merchant had found occasion to remark to a stranger with a certain complacency, "There are millionaires in two or three of our firms here, sir; but as for M. Grandet, he himself could hardly tell you how much he was worth!"

In 1816 the shrewdest heads in Saumur set down the value of the cooper's landed property at about four millions; but as, to strike a fair average, he must have drawn something like a hundred thousand francs (they thought) from his property between the years 1793 and 1817, the amount of money he possessed must nearly equal the value of the land. So when M. Grandet's name was mentioned over a game at boston, or a chat about the prospects of the vines, these folk would look wise and remark, "Who is that you are talking of? Old Grandet? . . . Old Grandet must have five or six millions, there is no doubt about it."

"Then you are cleverer than I am; I have never been able to find out how much he has," M. Cruchot or M. des Grassins would put in, if they overheard the speech.

If any one from Paris mentioned the Rothschilds or M. Laffitte, the good people in Saumur would ask if any of those persons were as rich as M. Grandet? And if the Parisian should answer in the affirmative with a pitying smile, they looked at one another incredulously and flung up their heads. So great a fortune was like a golden mantle; it covered its owner and all that he did. At one time some of the eccentricities of his mode of life gave rise to laughter at his expense; but the satire and the laughter had died out, and M. Grandet still went his way, till at last even his slight-

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est actions came to be taken as precedents, and every trifling thing he said or did carried weight. His remarks, his clothing, his gestures, the way he blinked his eyes, had all been studied with the care with which a naturalist studies the workings of instinct in some wild creature; and no one failed to discern the taciturn and profound wisdom that underlay all these manifestations.

"We shall have a hard winter," they would say; "old Grandet has put on his fur gloves, we must gather the grapes." Or, "Goodman Grandet is laying in a lot of cask staves; there will be plenty of wine this year."

M. Grandet never bought either meat or bread. Part of his rents were paid in kind, and every week his tenants brought in poultry, eggs, butter, and wheat sufficient for the needs of his household. Moreover, he owned a mill, and the miller, besides paying rent, came over to fetch a certain quantity of corn, and brought him back both the bran and the flour. Big Nanon, the one maid-servant, baked all the bread once a week on Saturday mornings (though she was not so young as she had been). Others of the tenants were market gardeners, and M. Grandet had arranged that these were to keep him supplied with fresh vegetables. Of fruit there was no lack; indeed, he sold a great deal of it in the market. Firewood was gathered from his own hedges, or taken from old stumps of trees that grew by the sides of his fields. His tenants chopped up the wood, carted it into the town, and obligingly stacked his fagots for him, receiving in return—his thanks. So he seldom had occasion to spend money. His only known items of expenditure were for sacramental bread, for sittings in the church for his wife and daughter, their dress, Nanon's wages, renewals of the linings of Nanon's saucepans, repairs about the house, candles, rates and taxes, and the necessary outlays of money for improvements. He had recently acquired six hundred acres of woodland, and, being unable to look after it himself, had induced a keeper belonging to a neighbor to attend to it, promising to repay the man for his trouble. After this purchase

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had been made, and not before, game appeared on the Grandets' table.

Grandet's manners were distinctly homely. He did not say very much. He expressed his ideas, as a rule, in brief, sententious phrases, uttered in a low voice. Since the time of the Revolution, when for a while he had attracted some attention, the worthy man had contracted a tiresome habit of stammering as soon as he took part in a discussion or began to speak at any length. He had other peculiarities. He habitually drowned his ideas in a flood of words more or less incoherent; his singular inaptitude for reasoning logically was usually set down to a defective education; but this, like his unwelcome fluency, the trick of stammering, and various other mannerisms, was assumed, and for reasons which, in the course of the story, will be made sufficiently clear. In conversation, moreover, he had other resources: four phrases, like algebraical formulæ, which fitted every case, were always forthcoming to solve every knotty problem in business or domestic life—"I do not know," "I cannot do it," "I will have nothing to do with it," and "We shall see." He never committed himself. He never said Yes or No; he never put anything down in writing. He listened with apparent indifference when he was spoken to, caressing his chin with his right hand, while the back of his left supported his elbow. When once he had formed his opinion in any matter of business, he never changed it; but he pondered long even over the smallest transactions. When in the course of deep and weighty converse he had managed to fathom the intentions of an antagonist, who meanwhile flattered himself that *he* at least knew where to have Grandet, the latter was wont to say, "I must talk it over with my wife before I can give a definite answer." In business matters the wife, whom he had reduced to the most abject submission, was unquestionably a most convenient support and screen.

He never paid visits, never dined away from home, nor asked any one to dinner; his movements were almost noiseless; he seemed to carry out his principles of economy in

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everything; to make no useless sound, to be chary of spending even physical energy. His respect for the rights of ownership was so habitual that he never displaced nor disturbed anything belonging to another. And yet, in spite of the low tones of his voice, in spite of his discretion and cautious bearing, the cooper's real character showed itself in his language and manners, and this was more especially the case in his own house, where he was less on his guard than elsewhere.

As to Grandet's exterior. He was a broad, square-shouldered, thick-set man, about five feet high; his legs were thin (he measured perhaps twelve inches round the calves), his knee joints large and prominent. He had a bullet-shaped head, a sun-burned face, scarred with the smallpox, and a narrow chin; there was no trace of a curve about the lines of his mouth. He possessed a set of white teeth, eyes with the expression of stony avidity in them with which the basilisk is credited, a deeply-furrowed brow on which there were prominences not lacking in significance, hair that had once been of a sandy hue, but which was now fast turning gray; so that thoughtless youngsters, rash enough to make jokes on so serious a subject, would say that M. Grandet's very hair was "gold and silver." On his nose, which was broad and blunt at the tip, was a variegated wen; gossip affirmed, not without some appearance of truth, that spite and rancor was the cause of this affection. There was a dangerous cunning about this face, although the man, indeed, was honest according to the letter of the law; it was a selfish face; there were but two things in the world for which its owner cared—the delights of hoarding wealth in the first place, and in the second, the only being who counted for anything in his estimation, his daughter Eugénie, his only child, who one day should inherit that wealth. His attitude, manner, bearing, and everything about him plainly showed that he had the belief in himself which is the natural outcome of an unbroken record of successful business speculations. Pliant and smooth-spoken though he might appear to be, M. Grandet was a man of bronze. He was always dressed after the same fashion; in

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1819 he looked in this respect exactly as he had looked at any time since 1791. His heavy shoes were secured by leather laces; he wore thick woolen stockings all the year round, knee breeches of chestnut brown homespun, silver buckles, a brown velvet waistcoat adorned with yellow stripes and buttoned up to the throat, a loosely-fitting coat with ample skirts, a black cravat, and a broad-brimmed Quaker-like hat. His gloves, like those of the gendarmerie, were chosen with a view to hard wear; a pair lasted him nearly two years. In order to keep them clean, he always laid them down on the same place on the brim of his hat, till the action had come to be mechanical with him. So much, and no more, Saumur knew of this her citizen.

A few fellow-townspeople, six in all, had the right of entry to Grandet's house and society. First among these in order of importance was M. Cruchot's nephew. Ever since his appointment as president of the court of first instance, this young man had added the appellation "de Bonfons" to his original name of Cruchot; in time he hoped that the Bonfons would efface the Cruchot, when he meant to drop the Cruchot altogether, and was at no little pains to compass this end. Already he styled himself C. de Bonfons. Any litigant who was so ill inspired as to address him in court as "M. Cruchot," was soon made painfully aware that he had blundered. The magistrate was about thirty-three years of age, and the owner of the estate of Bonfons (*Boni Fontis*), which brought in annually seven thousand livres. In addition to this he had prospects; he would succeed some day to the property of his uncle the notary, and there was yet another uncle besides, the Abbé Cruchot, a dignitary of the chapter of Saint Martin of Tours; both relatives were commonly reported to be men of substance. The three Cruchots, with a goodly number of kinsfolk, connected too by marriage with a score of other houses, formed a sort of party in the town, like the family of the Medicis in Florence long ago; and, like the Medicis, the Cruchots had their rivals—their Pazzi.

Mme.. des Grassins, the mother of a son of twenty-three

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years of age, came assiduously to take a hand at cards with Mme. Grandet, hoping to marry her own dear Adolphe to Mademoiselle Eugénie. She had a powerful ally in her husband the banker, who had secretly rendered the old miser many a service, and who could give opportune aid on her field of battle. The three des Grassins had likewise their host of adherents, their cousins, and trusty auxiliaries.

The Abbé (the Talleyrand of the Cruchot faction), well supported by his brother the notary, closely disputed the ground with the banker's wife; they meant to carry off the wealthy heiress for their nephew the president. The struggle between the two parties for the prize of the hand of Eugénie Grandet was an open secret; all Saumur watched it with the keenest interest. Which would Mlle. Grandet marry? Would it be M. le Président or M. Adolphe des Grassins? Some solved the problem by saying that M. Grandet would give his daughter to neither. The old cooper (said they) was consumed with an ambition to have a peer of France for his son-in-law, and he was on the look-out for a peer of France, who for the consideration of an income of three hundred thousand livres would find all the past, present, and future barrels of the Grandets no obstacle to a match. Others demurred to this, and urged that both M. and Mme. des Grassins came of a good family, that they had wealth enough for anything, that Adolphe was a very good-looking, pretty behaved young man, and that unless the Grandets had a Pope's nephew somewhere in the background, they ought to be satisfied with a match in every way so suitable; for they were nobodies after all; all Saumur had seen Grandet going about with an adze in his hands, and moreover he had worn the red cap of Liberty in his time.

The more astute observers remarked that M. Cruchot de Bonfons was free of the house in the High Street, while his rival only visited there on Sundays. Some maintained that Mme. des Grassins, being on more intimate terms with the women of the house, had opportunities of inculcating certain ideas which sooner or later must conduce to her success.

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Others retorted that the Abbé Cruchot had the most insinuating manner in the world, and that with a churchman on one side and a woman on the other the chances were about even.

"It is gown against cassock," said a local wit.

Those whose memories went further back, said that the Grandets were too prudent to let all that property go out of the family. Mlle. Eugénie Grandet of Saumur would be married one of these days to the son of the other M. Grandet of Paris, a rich wholesale wine merchant. To these both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were wont to reply as follows:—

"In the first place, the brothers have not met twice in thirty years. Then M. Grandet of Paris is ambitious for that son of his. He himself is mayor of his division of the department, a deputy, a colonel of the National Guard, and a judge of the tribunal of commerce. He does not own to any relationship with the Grandets of Saumur, and is seeking to connect himself with one of Napoleon's dukes."

What will not people say of an heiress? Eugénie Grandet was a stock subject of conversation for twenty leagues round; nay, in public conveyances, even as far as Angers on the one hand and Blois on the other!

In the beginning of the year 1811 the Cruchotins gained a signal victory over the Grassinistes. The young Marquis de Froidfond being compelled to realize his capital, the estate of Froidfond, celebrated for its park and its handsome château, was for sale; together with its dependent farms, rivers, fishponds, and forest; altogether it was worth three million francs. M. Cruchot, President Cruchot, and the Abbé Cruchot by uniting their forces had managed to prevent a proposed division into small lots. The notary made an uncommonly good bargain for his client, representing to the young marquis that the purchase money of the small lots could only be collected after endless trouble and expense, and that he would have to sue a large proportion of the purchasers for it; while here was M. Grandet, a man whose credit stood high, and who was moreover ready to pay for the land at once in hard coin, it would be better to take M. Grandet's

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offer. In this way the fair marquisate of Froidfond was swallowed down by M. Grandet, who, to the amazement of Saumur, paid for it in ready money (deducting discount of course) as soon as the required formalities were completed. The news of this transaction traveled far and wide; it reached Orleans; it was spoken of at Nantes.

M. Grandet went to see his château, and on this wise: a cart happened to be returning thither, so he embraced this opportunity of visiting his newly acquired property, and took a look round in the capacity of owner. Then he returned to Saumur, well convinced that this investment would bring him in a clear five per cent, and fired with a magnificent ambition; he would add his own bits of land to the marquisate of Froidfond, and everything should lie within a ring fence. For the present he would set himself to replenish his almost exhausted coffers; he would cut down every stick of timber in his copses and forests, and fell the poplars in his meadows.

It is easy after this explanation to understand all that was conveyed by the words, "M. Grandet's house"—the cold, dreary, and silent house at the upper end of the town, under the shadow of the ruined ramparts.

Two pillars supported the arch above the doorway, and for these, as also for the building of the house itself, a porous crumbling stone peculiar to the district along the banks of the Loire had been employed, a kind of tufa so soft that at most it scarcely lasts for two hundred years. Rain and frost had gnawed numerous irregular holes in the surface, with a curious effect; the piers and the voussoirs looked as though they were composed of the vermicular stones often met with in French architecture. The doorway might have been the portal of a jail. Above the arch there was a long sculptured bas-relief of harder stone, representing the four Seasons, four forlorn figures, aged, blackened, and weather worn. Above the bas-relief there was a projecting ledge of masonry where some chance-sown plants had taken root; yellow pellitory, bindweed, a plantain or two, and a little cherry-tree, that even now had reached a fair height.

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The massive door itself was of dark oak, shrunk and warped, and full of cracks; but, feeble as it looked, it was firmly held together by a series of iron nails with huge heads, driven into the wood in a symmetrical design. In the middle there was a small square grating covered with rusty iron bars, which served as an excuse for a door knocker which hung there from a ring, and struck upon the menacing head a great iron bolt. The knocker itself, oblong in shape, was of the kind that our ancestors used to call a "Jaquemart," and not unlike a huge note of admiration. If an antiquary had examined it carefully, he might have found some traces of the grotesque human head that it once represented, but the features of the typical clown had long since been effaced by constant wear. The little grating had been made in past times of civil war, so that the household might recognize their friends without before admitting them, but now it afforded to inquisitive eyes a view of a dank and gloomy archway, and a flight of broken steps leading to a not unpicturesque garden shut in by thick walls through which the damp was oozing, and a hedge of sickly-looking shrubs. The walls were part of the old fortifications, and up above upon the ramparts there were yet other gardens belonging to some of the neighboring houses.

A door beneath the arch of the gateway opened into a large parlor, the principal room on the ground floor. Few people comprehend the importance of this apartment in little towns in Anjou, Berri, and Touraine. The parlor is also the hall, drawing-room, study, and boudoir all in one; it is the stage on which the drama of domestic life is played, the very heart and centre of the home. Hither the hairdresser repaired once in six months to cut M. Grandet's hair. The tenants and the curé, the sous-préfet and the miller's lad, were all alike shown into this room. There were two windows which looked out upon the street, the floor was boarded, the walls were paneled from floor to ceiling, covered with old carvings, and painted gray. The rafters were left visible, and were likewise painted gray, the plaster in intervening spaces was yellow with age.

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An old brass clock case inlaid with arabesques in tortoise-shell stood on the chimney-piece, which was of white stone, and adorned with rude carvings. Above it stood a mirror of a greenish hue, the edges were beveled in order to display the thickness of the glass, and reflected a thin streak of colored light into the room, which was caught again by the polished surface of another mirror of Damascus steel, which hung upon the wall.

Two branched sconces of gilded copper which adorned either end of the chimney-piece answered a double purpose. The branch roses which served as candle-sockets were removable, and the main stem, fitted into an antique copper contrivance on a bluish marble pedestal, did duty as a candlestick for ordinary days.

The old-fashioned chairs were covered with tapestry, on which the fables of La Fontaine were depicted; but a thorough knowledge of the author was required in order to make out the subjects, for the colors had faded badly, and the outlines of the figures were hardly visible through a multitude of darns. Four sideboards occupied the four corners of the room, each of these articles of furniture terminating in a tier of very dirty shelves. An old inlaid card-table with a chess-board marked out upon its surface stood in the space between the two windows, and on the wall, above the table, hung an oval barometer in a dark wooden setting, adorned by a carved bunch of ribbons; they had been gilt ribbons once upon a time, but generations of flies had wantonly obscured the gilding, till its existence had become problematical. Two portraits in pastel hung on the wall opposite the fireplace. One was believed to represent Mme. Grandet's grandfather, old M. de la Bertellière, as a lieutenant in the Guards, and the other the late Mme. Gentillet as a shepherdess.

Crimson curtains of *gros de Tours* were hung in the windows and fastened back with silk cords and huge tassels. This luxurious upholstery, so little in harmony with the manners and customs of the Grandets, had been included in the purchase of the house, like the pier-glass, the brass timepiece,

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the tapestry-covered chairs, and the rosewood corner sideboards. In the further window stood a straw-bottomed chair, raised on blocks of wood, so that Mme. Grandet could watch the passers-by as she sat. A work-table of cherry wood, bleached and faded by the light, filled the other window space, and close beside it Eugénie Grandet's little armchair was set.

The lives of mother and daughter had flowed on tranquilly for fifteen years. Day after day, from April to November, they sat at work in the windows; but the first day of the latter month found them beside the fire, where they took up their positions for the winter. Grandet would not allow a fire to be lighted in the room before that date, nor again after the 31st of March, let the early days of spring or of autumn be cold as they might. Big Nanon managed by stealth to fill a little brazier with glowing ashes from the kitchen fire, and in this way the chilly evenings of April and October were rendered tolerable for Mme. and Mlle. Grandet. All the household linen was kept in repair by the mother and daughter; and so conscientiously did they devote their days to this duty (no light task in truth), that if Eugénie wanted to embroider a collarette for her mother she was obliged to steal the time from her hours of slumber, and to resort to a deception to obtain from her father the candle by which she worked. For a long while past it had been the miser's wont to dole out the candles to his daughter and big Nanon in the same way that he gave out the bread and the other matters daily required by the household.

Perhaps big Nanon was the one servant in existence who could and would have endured her master's tyrannous rule. Every one in the town used to envy M. and Mme. Grandet. "Big Nanon," so called on account of her height of five feet eight inches, had been a part of the Grandet household for thirty-five years. She was held to be one of the richest servants in Saumur, and this on a yearly wage of seventy livres! The seventy livres had accumulated for thirty-five years, and quite recently Nanon had deposited four thousand livres with M. Cruchot for the purchase of an annuity.

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This result of a long and persevering course of thrift appealed to the imagination—it seemed tremendous. There was not a maid-servant in Saumur but was envious of the poor woman, who by the time she had reached her sixtieth year would have scraped together enough to keep herself from want in her old age; but no one thought of the hard life and all the toil which had gone to the making of that little hoard.

Thirty-five years ago, when Nanon had been a homely, hard-featured girl of two and twenty, she had not been able to find a place because her appearance had been so much against her. Poor Nanon! it was really very hard. If her head had been set on the shoulders of a grenadier it would have been greatly admired, but there is a fitness in things, and Nanon's style of beauty was inappropriate. She had been a herdswoman on a farm for a time, till the farmhouse had been burnt down, and then it was, that, full of the robust courage that shrinks from nothing, she came to seek service in Saumur.

At that time M. Grandet was thinking of marriage, and already determined to set up housekeeping. The girl, who had been rebuffed from door to door, came under his notice. He was a cooper, and therefore a good judge of physical strength; he foresaw at once how useful this feminine Hercules could be, a strongly-made woman who stood planted as firmly on her feet as an oak tree rooted in the soil where it has grown for two generations, a woman with square shoulders, large hips, and hands like a ploughman's, and whose honesty was as unquestionable as her virtue. He was not dismayed by a martial countenance, a disfiguring wart or two, a complexion like burnt clay, and a pair of sinewy arms; neither did Nanon's rags alarm the cooper, whose heart was not yet hardened against misery. He took the poor girl into his service, gave her food, clothes, shoes and wages. Nanon found her hard life not intolerably hard. Nay, she secretly shed tears of joy at being so treated; she felt a sincere attachment for this master, who expected as much from her as ever feudal lord required of a serf.

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Nanon did all the work of the house. She did the cooking and the washing, carrying all the linen down to the Loire and bringing it back on her shoulders. She rose at daybreak and went to bed late. It was she who, without any assistance, cooked for the vintagers in the autumn, and looked sharply after the market-folk. She watched over her master's property like a faithful dog, and with a blind belief in him; she obeyed his most arbitrary commands without a murmur—his whims were law to her.

After twenty years of service, in the famous year 1811, when the vintage had been gathered in after unheard-of toil and trouble, Grandet made up his mind to present Nanon with his old watch, the only gift she had ever received from him. She certainly had the reversion of his old shoes (which happened to fit her), but as a rule they were so far seen into already that they were of little use to any one else, and could not be looked upon as a present. Sheer necessity had made the poor girl so penurious that Grandet grew quite fond of her at last, and regarded her with the same sort of affection that a man gives to his dog; and as for Nanon, she cheerfully wore the collar of servitude set round with spikes that she had ceased to feel. Grandet might stint the day's allowance of bread, but she did not grumble. The fare might be scanty and poor, but Nanon's spirits did not suffer, and her health appeared to benefit; there was never any illness in that house.

And then Nanon was one of the family. She shared every mood of Grandet's, laughed when he laughed, was depressed when he was out of spirits, took her views of the weather or of the temperature from him, and worked with him and for him. This equality was an element of sweetness which made up for many hardships in her lot. Out in the vineyards her master had never said a word about the small peaches, plums, or nectarines eaten under the trees that are planted between the rows of vines.

"Come, Nanon, take as much as you like," he would say, in years when the branches were bending beneath their load, and fruit was so abundant that the farmers round about were forced to give it to the pigs.

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For the peasant girl, for the outdoor farm servant, who had known nothing but harsh treatment from childhood, for the girl who had been rescued from starvation by charity, old Grandet's equivocal laughter was like a ray of sunshine. Besides, Nanon's simple nature and limited intelligence could only entertain one idea at a time; and during those thirty-five years of service one picture was constantly present to her mind—she saw herself a barefooted girl in rags standing at the gate of M. Grandet's timber yard, and heard the sound of the cooper's voice, saying, "What is it, lassie?" and the warmth of gratitude filled her heart to-day as it did then. Sometimes, as he watched her, the thought came up in Grandet's mind how that no syllable of praise or admiration had ever been breathed in her ears, that all the tender feelings that a woman inspires had no existence for her, and that she might well appear before God one day as chaste as the Virgin Mary herself. At such times, prompted by a sudden impulse of pity, he would exclaim, "Poor Nanon!"

The remark was always followed by an indescribable look from the old servant. The words so spoken from time to time were separate links in a long and unbroken chain of friendship. But in this pity in the miser's soul, which gave a thrill of pleasure to the lonely woman, there was something indescribably revolting; it was a cold-blooded pity that stirred the cooper's heart; it was a luxury that cost him nothing. But for Nanon it meant the height of happiness! Who will not likewise say, "Poor Nanon!" God will one day know His angels by the tones of their voices and by the sorrow hidden in their hearts.

There were plenty of households in Saumur where servants were better treated, but where their employers, nevertheless, enjoyed small comfort in return. Wherefore people asked, "What have the Grandets done to that big Nanon of theirs that she should be so attached to them? She would go through fire and water to serve them!"

Her kitchen, with its barred windows that looked out into the yard, was always clean, cold, and tidy, a thorough miser's

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kitchen, in which nothing was allowed to be wasted. When Nanon had washed her plates and dishes, put the remains of the dinner into the safe, and raked out the fire, she left her kitchen (which was only separated from the dining-room by the breadth of a passage), and sat down to spin hemp in the company of her employers, for a single candle must suffice for the whole family in the evening. The serving-maid slept in a little dark closet at the end of the passage, lit only by a borrowed light. Nanon had an iron constitution and sound health, which enabled her to sleep with impunity year after year in this hole, where she could hear the slightest sound that broke the heavy silence brooding day and night over the house; she lay like a watch-dog, with one ear open; she was never off duty, not even while she slept.

Some description of the rest of the house will be necessary in the course of the story in connection with later events; but the parlor, wherein all the splendor and luxury of the house was concentrated, has been sketched already, and the emptiness and bareness of the upper rooms can be surmised for the present.

It was in the middle of November, in the year 1819, twilight was coming on, and big Nanon was lighting a fire in the parlor for the first time. It was a festival day in the calendar of the Cruchotins and Grassinistes, wherefore the six antagonists were preparing to set forth, all armed cap-à-pie, for a contest in which each side meant to outdo the other in proofs of friendship. The Grandets' parlor was to be the scene of action. That morning Mme. and Mlle. Grandet, duly attended by Nanon, had repaired to the parish church to hear mass. All Saumur had seen them go, and every one had been put in mind of the fact that it was Eugénie's birthday. M. Cruchot, the Abbé Cruchot, and M. C. de Bonfons, therefore, having calculated the hour when dinner would be over, were eager to be first in the field, and to arrive before the Grassinistes to congratulate Mlle. Grandet. All three carried huge bunches of flowers, gathered in their little

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garden plots, but the stalks of the magistrate's bouquet were ingeniously bound round by a white satin ribbon with a tinsel fringe at the ends.

In the morning M. Grandet had gone to Eugénie's room before she had left her bed, and had solemnly presented her with a rare gold coin. It was her father's wont to surprise her in this way twice every year—once on her birthday, once on the equally memorable day of her patron saint. Mme. Grandet usually gave her daughter a winter or a summer dress, according to circumstances. The two dresses and two gold coins, which she received on her father's birthday and on New Year's Day, altogether amounted to an annual income of nearly a hundred crowns; Grandet loved to watch the money accumulating in her hands. He did not part with his money; he felt that it was only like taking it out of one box and putting it into another; and besides, was it not, so to speak, fostering a proper regard for gold in his heiress? she was being trained in the way in which she should go. Now and then he asked for an account of her wealth (formerly swelled by gifts from the La Bertellières), and each time he did so he used to tell her, "This will be your *dozen* when you are married."

The *dozen* is an old-world custom which has lost none of its force, and is still religiously adhered to in several midland districts in France. In Berri or Anjou when a daughter is married, it is incumbent upon her parents, or upon her bridegroom's family, to give her a purse containing either a dozen, or twelve dozen, or twelve hundred gold or silver coins, the amount varying with the means of the family. The poorest herd-girl would not be content without her *dozen* when she married, even if she could only bring twelve pence as a dower. They talk even yet at Issoudun of a fabulous dozen once given to a rich heiress, which consisted of a hundred and forty-four Portuguese moidores; and when Catherine de Medicis was married to Henry II., her uncle, Clement VII., gave the bride a dozen antique gold medals of priceless value.

Eugénie wore her new dress at dinner, and looked prettier than usual in it; her father was in high good humor.

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"Let us have a fire," he cried, "as it is Eugénie's birthday! It will be a good omen!"

"Mademoiselle will be married within the year, that's certain," said big Nanon, as she removed the remains of a goose, that pheasant of the coopers of Saumur.

"There is no one that I know of in Saumur who would do for Eugénie," said Mme. Grandet, with a timid glance at her husband, a glance that revealed how completely her husband's tyranny had broken the poor woman's spirit.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and said merrily, "We must really begin to think about her; the little girl is twenty-three years old to-day."

Neither Eugénie nor her mother said a word, but they exchanged glances; they understood each other.

Mme. Grandet's face was thin and wrinkled and yellow as saffron; she was awkward and slow in her movements, one of those beings who seem born to be tyrannized over. She was a large-boned woman, with a large nose, large eyes, and a prominent forehead; there seemed to be, at first sight, some dim suggestion of a resemblance between her and some shriveled, spongy, dried-up fruit. The few teeth that remained to her were dark and discolored; there were deep lines fretted about her mouth, and her chin was something after the "nut-cracker" pattern. She was a good sort of woman, and a La Bertellière to the backbone. The Abbé Cruchot had more than once found occasion to tell her that she had not been so bad looking when she was young, and she did not disagree with him. An angelic sweetness of disposition, the helpless meekness of an insect in the hands of cruel children, a sincere piety, a kindly heart, and an even temper that nothing could ruffle or sour, had gained universal respect and pity for her.

Her appearance might provoke a smile, but she had brought her husband more than three hundred thousand francs, partly as her dowry, partly through bequests. Yet Grandet never gave his wife more than six francs at a time for pocket money, and she always regarded herself as dependent upon her husband. The meek gentleness of her nature forbade any revolt

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against his tyranny; but so deeply did she feel the humiliation of her position, that she had never asked him for a sou, and when M. Cruchot demanded her signature to any document, she always gave it without a word. This foolish sensitive pride, which Grandet constantly and unwittingly hurt, this magnanimity which he was quite incapable of understanding, were Mme. Grandet's dominant characteristics.

Her dress never varied. Her gown was always of the same dull, greenish shade of laventine, and usually lasted her nearly a twelvemonth; the large handkerchief at her throat was of some kind of cotton material; she wore a straw bonnet, and was seldom seen without a black silk apron. She left the house so rarely that her walking shoes were seldom worn out; indeed, her requirements were very few, she never wanted anything for herself. Sometimes it would occur to Grandet that it was a long while since he had given the last six francs to his wife, and his conscience would prick him a little; and after the vintage, when he sold his wine, he always demanded pin-money for his wife over and above the bargain. These four or five louis out of the pockets of the Dutch or Belgian merchants were Mme. Grandet's only certain source of yearly income. But although she received her five louis, her husband would often say to her, as if they had had one common purse, "Have you a few sous that you can lend me?" and she, poor woman, glad that it was in her power to do anything for the man whom her confessor always taught her to regard as her lord and master, used to return to him more than one crown out of her little store in the course of the winter. Every month, when Grandet disbursed the five-franc piece which he allowed his daughter for needles, thread, and small expenses of dress, he remarked to his wife (after he had buttoned up his pocket), "And how about you, mother; do you want anything?" And with a mother's dignity Mme. Grandet would answer, "We will talk about that by-and-by, dear."

Her magnanimity was entirely lost upon Grandet; he considered that he did very handsomely by his wife. The philosophic mind contemplating the Nanons, the Mme. Gran-

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dets, the Eugénies of this life, holds that the Author of the universe is a profound satirist, and who will quarrel with the conclusion of the philosophic mind? After the dinner, when the question of Eugénie's marriage had been raised for the first time, Nanon went up to M. Grandet's room to fetch a bottle of black currant cordial, and very nearly lost her footing on the staircase as she came down.

"Great stupid! Are *you* going to take to tumbling about?" inquired her master.

"It is all along of the step, sir; it gave way. The staircase isn't safe."

"She is quite right," said Mme. Grandet. "You ought to have had it mended long ago. Eugénie all but sprained her foot on it yesterday."

"Here," said Grandet, who saw that Nanon looked very pale, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, and you have nearly fallen downstairs, take a drop of black currant cordial; that will put you right again."

"I deserve it, too, upon my word," said Nanon. "Many a one would have broken the bottle in my place; I should have broken my elbow first, holding it up to save it."

"Poor Nanon!" muttered Grandet, pouring out the black currant cordial for her.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Eugénie, looking at her in concern.

"No, I managed to break the fall; I came down on my side."

"Well," said Grandet, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, I will mend your step for you. Somehow you women folk cannot manage to put your foot down in the corner, where it is still solid and safe."

Grandet took up the candle, left the three women without any other illumination in the room than the bright dancing firelight, and went to the bakehouse, where tools, nails, and odd pieces of wood were kept.

"Do you want any help?" Nanon called to him, when the first blow sounded on the staircase.

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"No! no! I am an old hand at it," answered the cooper.

At this very moment, while Grandet was doing the repairs himself to his worm-eaten staircase, and whistling with all his might as memories of his young days came up in his mind, the three Cruchots knocked at the house door.

"Oh, it's you, is it, M. Cruchot?" asked Nanon, as she took a look through the small square grating.

"Yes," answered the magistrate.

Nanon opened the door, and the glow of the firelight shone on the three Cruchots, who were groping in the archway.

"Oh! you have come to help us keep her birthday," Nanon said, as the scent of flowers reached her.

"Excuse me a moment, gentlemen," cried Grandet, who recognized the voices of his acquaintances; "I am your very humble servant! There is no pride about me; I am patching up a broken stair here myself."

"Go on, go on, M. Grandet! The charcoal burner is mayor in his own house," said the magistrate sententiously. Nobody saw the allusion, and he had his laugh all to himself.

Mme. and Mlle. Grandet rose to greet them. The magistrate took advantage of the darkness to speak to Eugénie.

"Will you permit me, mademoiselle, on the anniversary of your birthday, to wish you a long succession of prosperous years, and may you for long preserve the health with which you are blessed at present."

He then offered her such a bouquet of flowers as was seldom seen in Saumur; and taking the heiress by both arms, gave her a kiss on either side of the throat, a fervent salute which brought the color into Eugénie's face. The magistrate was tall and thin, somewhat resembling a rusty nail; this was his notion of paying court.

"Do not disturb yourselves," said Grandet, coming back into the room. "Fine doings these of yours, M. le Président, on high days and holidays!"

"With mademoiselle beside him, every day would be a holiday for my nephew," answered the Abbé Cruchot, also armed with a bouquet; and with that the Abbé kissed Eugénie's

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hand. As for M. Cruchot, he kissed her unceremoniously on both cheeks, saying, "This sort of thing makes us feel older, eh? A whole year older every twelve months."

Grandet set down the candle in front of the brass clock on the chimney-piece; whenever a joke amused him he kept on repeating it till it was worn threadbare; he did so now.

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday," he said, "let us have an illumination."

He carefully removed the branches from the two sconces, fitted the sockets into either pedestal, took from Nanon's hands a whole new candle wrapped in a scrap of paper, fixed it firmly in the socket, and lighted it. Then he went over to his wife and took up his position beside her, looking by turns at his daughter, his friends, and the two lighted candles.

The Abbé Cruchot was a fat, dumpy little man with a well-worn, sandy peruke. His peculiar type of face might have belonged to some old lady whose life is spent at the card table. At this moment he was stretching out his feet and displaying a very neat and strong pair of shoes with silver buckles on them.

"The des Grassins have not come round?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered Grandet.

"Are they sure to come?" put in the old notary, with various contortions of a countenance as full of holes as a colander.

"Oh! yes, I think they will come," said Mme. Grandet.

"Is the vintage over?" asked President de Bonfons, addressing Grandet, "are all your grapes gathered?"

"Yes, everywhere!" answered the old vinegrower, rising and walking up and down the length of the room; he straightened himself up as he spoke with a conscious pride that appeared in that word "everywhere."

As he passed by the door that opened into the passage, Grandet caught a glimpse of the kitchen; the fire was still alight, a candle was burning there, and big Nanon was about to begin her spinning by the hearth; she did not wish to intrude upon the birthday party

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"Nanon!" he called, stepping out into the passage, "Nanon! why ever don't you rake out the fire; put out the candle and come in here! *Pardieu!* the room is large enough to hold us all."

"But you are expecting grand visitors, sir."

"Have you any objection to them? They are all descended from Adam just as much as you are."

Grandet went back to the president.

"Have you sold your wine?" he inquired.

"Not I; I am holding it. If the wine is good now, it will be better still in two years' time. The growers, as you know, of course, are in a ring, and mean to keep prices up. The Belgians shall not have it all their own way this year. And if they go away, well and good, let them go; they will come back again."

"Yes; but we must hold firm," said Grandet in a tone that made the magistrate shudder.

"Suppose he should sell his wine behind our backs?" he thought.

At that moment another knock at the door announced the des Grassins, and interrupted a quiet talk between Mme. Grandet and the Abbé Cruchot.

Mme. des Grassins was a dumpy, lively little person with a pink-and-white complexion, one of those women for whom the course of life in a country town has flowed on with almost claustral tranquillity, and who, thanks to this regular and virtuous existence, are still youthful at the age of forty. They are something like the late roses in autumn, which are fair and pleasant to the sight, but the almost scentless petals have a pinched look, there is a vague suggestion of coming winter about them. She dressed tolerably well, her gowns came from Paris, she was a leader of society in Saumur, and received on certain evenings. Her husband had been a quartermaster in the Imperial Guard, but he had retired from the army with a pension, after being badly wounded at Austerlitz. In spite of his consideration for Grandet, he still retained, or affected to retain, the bluff manners of a soldier.

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"Good day, Grandet," he said, holding out his hand to the cooper with that wonted air of superiority with which he eclipsed the Cruchot faction. "Mademoiselle," he added, addressing Eugénie, after a bow to Mme. Grandet, "you are always charming, ever good and fair, and what more can one wish you?"

With that he presented her with a small box, which a servant was carrying, and which contained a Cape heath, a plant only recently introduced into Europe, and very rare.

Mme. des Grassins embraced Eugénie very affectionately, squeezed her hand, and said, "I have commissioned Adolphe to give you my little birthday gift."

A tall, fair-haired young man, somewhat pallid and weakly in appearance, came forward at this; his manners were passably good, although he seemed to be shy. He had just completed his law studies in Paris, where he had managed to spend eight or ten thousand francs over and above his allowance. He now kissed Eugénie on both cheeks, and laid a workbox with gilded silver fittings before her; it was a showy, trumpery thing enough, in spite of the little shield on the lid, on which an E. G. had been engraved in Gothic characters, a detail which gave an imposing air to the whole. Eugénie raised the lid with a little thrill of pleasure, the happiness was as complete as it was unlooked for—the happiness that brings bright color into a young girl's face and makes her tremble with delight. Her eyes turned to her father as if to ask whether she might accept the gift; M. Grandet answered the mute inquiry with a "Take it, my daughter!" in tones which would have made the reputation of an actor. The three Cruchots stood dumfounded when they saw the bright, delighted glance that Adolphe des Grassins received from the heiress, who seemed to be dazzled by such undreamed-of splendors.

M. des Grassins offered his snuff-box to Grandet, took a pinch himself, brushed off a few stray specks from his blue coat and from the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at his button-hole, and looked at the Cruchots, as who should say, "Parry that thrust if you can!" Mme. des Grassins' eyes

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fell on the blue glass jars in which the Cruchots' bouquets had been set. She looked at their gifts with the innocent air of pretended interest which a satirical woman knows how to assume upon occasion. It was a delicate crisis. The Abbé got up and left the others, who were forming a circle round the fire, and joined Grandet in his promenade up and down the room. When the two elders had reached the embrasure of the window at the further end, away from the group by the fire, the priest said in the miser's ear, "Those people yonder are throwing their money out of the windows."

"What does that matter to me, so long as it comes my way?" the old vinegrower answered.

"If you had a mind to give your daughter golden scissors, you could very well afford it," said the Abbé.

"I shall give her something better than scissors," Grandet answered.

"What an idiot my nephew is!" thought the Abbé, as he looked at the magistrate, whose dark, ill-favored countenance was set off to perfection at that moment by a shock head of hair. "Why couldn't *he* have hit on some expensive piece of foolery?"

"We will take a hand at cards, Mme. Grandet," said Mme. des Grassins.

"But as we are all here, there are enough of us for two tables. . . "

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday, why not all play together at loto?" said old Grandet; "these two children could join in the game."

The old cooper, who never played at any game whatever, pointed to his daughter and Adolphe.

"Here, Nanon, move the tables out."

"We will help you, Mademoiselle Nanon," said Mme. des Grassins cheerfully; she was thoroughly pleased because she had pleased Eugénie.

"I have never seen anything so pretty anywhere," the heiress had said to her. "I have never been so happy in my life before."

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"It was Adolphe who chose it," said Mme. des Grassins in the girl's ear; "he brought it from Paris."

"Go your ways, accursed scheming woman," muttered the magistrate to himself. "If you or your husband ever find yourselves in a court of law, you shall be hard put to it to gain the day."

The notary, calmly seated in his corner, watched the Abbé, and said to himself, "The des Grassins may do what they like; my fortune and my brother's and my nephew's fortunes altogether mount up to eleven hundred thousand francs. The des Grassins, at the very most, have only half as much, and they have a daughter. Let them give whatever they like, all will be ours some day—the heiress and her presents too."

Two tables were in readiness by half-past eight o'clock. Mme. des Grassins, with her winning ways, had succeeded in placing her son next to Eugénie. The actors in the scene, so commonplace in appearance, so full of interest beneath the surface, each provided with slips of pasteboard of various colors and blue glass counters, seemed to be listening to the little jokes made by the old notary, who never drew a number without making some remark upon it, but they were all thinking of M. Grandet's millions. The old cooper himself eyed the group with a certain self-complacency; he looked at Mme. des Grassins with her pink feathers and fresh toilette, at the banker's soldierly face, at Adolphe, at the magistrate, at the Abbé and the notary, and within himself he said: "They are all after my crowns; that is what they are here for. It is for my daughter that they come to be bored here. Aha! and my daughter is for none of them, and all these people are so many harpoons to be used in my fishing."

The merriment of this family party, the laughter, only sincere when it came from Eugénie or her mother, and to which the low whirring of Nanon's spinning-wheel made an accompaniment, the sordid meanness playing for high stakes, the young girl herself, like some rare bird, the innocent victim of its high value, tracked down and snared by specious pretences of friendship; taken altogether, it was a sorry comedy

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that was being played in the old gray-painted parlor, by the dim light of the two candles. Was it not, however, a drama of all time, played out everywhere all over the world, but here reduced to its simplest expression? Old Grandet towered above the other actors, turning all this sham affection to his own account, and reaping a rich harvest from this simulated friendship. His face hovered above the scene like the interpretation of an evil dream. He was like the incarnation of the one god who yet finds worshipers in modern times, of Money and the power of wealth.

With him the gentler and sweeter impulses of human life only occupied the second place; but they so filled three purer hearts there, that there was no room in them for other thoughts—the hearts of Nanon, and of Eugénie and her mother. And yet, how much ignorance mingled with their innocent simplicity! Eugénie and her mother knew nothing of Grandet's wealth; they saw everything through a medium of dim ideas peculiar to their own narrow world, and neither desired nor despised money, accustomed as they were to do without it. Nor were they conscious of an uncongenial atmosphere; the strength of their feelings, their inner life, made of them a strange exception in this gathering, wholly intent upon material interests. Appalling is the condition of man; there is no drop of happiness in his lot but has its source in ignorance.

Just as Mme. Grandet had won sixteen sous, the largest amount that had ever been punted beneath that roof, and big Nanon was beaming with delight at the sight of Madame pocketing that splendid sum, there was a knock at the house-door, so sudden and so loud that the women started on their chairs.

"No one in Saumur would knock in that way," said the notary.

"What do they thump like that for?" said Nanon. "Do they want to break our door down?"

"Who the devil is it?" cried Grandet.

Nanon took up one of the candles and went to open the door. Grandet followed her.

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"Grandet! Grandet!" cried his wife; a vague terror seized her, and she hurried to the door of the room.

The players all looked at each other.

"Suppose we go too?" said M. des Grassins. "That knock meant no good, it seemed to me."

But M. des Grassins scarcely caught a glimpse of a young man's face and of a porter who was carrying two huge trunks and an assortment of carpet bags, before Grandet turned sharply on his wife and said—

"Go back to your loto, Mme. Grandet, and leave me to settle with this gentleman here."

With that he slammed the parlor door, and the loto players sat down again, but they were too much excited to go on with the game.

"Is it any one who lives in Saumur, M. des Grassins?" his wife inquired.

"No, a traveler."

"Then he must have come from Paris."

"As a matter of fact," said the notary, drawing out a heavy antique watch, a couple of fingers' breadth in thickness, and not unlike a Dutch punt in shape, "as a matter of fact, it is nine o'clock. *Peste!* the mail coach is not often behind time."

"Is he young looking?" put in the Abbé Cruchot.

"Yes," answered M. des Grassins. "The luggage he has with him must weigh three hundred kilos at least."

"Nanon does not come back," said Eugénie.

"It must be some relation of yours," the President remarked.

"Let us put down our stakes," said Mme. Grandet gently. "M. Grandet was vexed, I could tell that by the sound of his voice, and perhaps he would be displeased if he came in and found us all discussing his affairs."

"Mademoiselle," Adolphe addressed his neighbor, "it will be your cousin Grandet no doubt, a very nice looking young fellow whom I once met at a ball at M. de Nucingen's."

Adolphe went no further, his mother stamped on his foot

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under the table. Aloud, she asked him for two sous for his stake, adding in an undertone, meant only for his ears, "Will you hold your tongue, you great silly?"

They could hear the footsteps of Nanon and the porter on the staircase, but Grandet returned to the room almost immediately, and just behind him came the traveler who had excited so much curiosity, and loomed so large in the imaginations of those assembled; indeed, his sudden descent into their midst might be compared to the arrival of a snail in a beehive, or the entrance of a peacock into some humdrum village poultry-yard.

"Take a seat near the fire," said Grandet, addressing the stranger.

The young man looked around the room and bowed very gracefully before seating himself. The men rose and bowed politely in return, the women curtseyed rather ceremoniously.

"You are feeling cold, I expect, sir," said Mme. Grandet; "you have no doubt come from——"

"Just like the women!" broke in the goodman, looking up from the letter which he held in his hand. "Do let the gentleman have a little peace."

"But, father, perhaps the gentleman wants something after his journey," said Eugénie.

"He has a tongue in his head," the vinegrower answered severely.

The stranger alone felt any surprise at this scene, the rest were quite used to the worthy man and his arbitrary behavior. But after the two inquiries had received these summary answers, the stranger rose and stood with his back to the fire, held out a foot to the blaze, so as to warm the soles of his boots, and said to Eugénie, "Thank you, cousin, I dined at Tours. And I do not require anything," he added, glancing at Grandet; "I am not in the least tired."

"Do you come from Paris?" (it was Mme. des Grassins who now put the inquiry).

M. Charles (for this was the name borne by the son of M. Grandet of Paris), hearing some one question him, took out

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an eyeglass that hung suspended from his neck by a cord, fixed it in his eye, and made a deliberate survey of the objects upon the table and of the people sitting round it, eyed Mme. des Grassins very coolly, and said (when he had completed his survey), "Yes, madame.—You are playing at loto, aunt," he added; "pray go on with your game, it is too amusing to be broken off . . ."

"I knew it was the cousin," thought Mme. des Grassins, and she gave him a side-glance from time to time.

"Forty-seven," cried the old Abbé. "Keep count. Mme. des Grassins, that is your number, is it not?"

M. des Grassins put down a counter on his wife's card; the lady herself was not thinking of loto, her mind was full of melancholy forebodings; she was watching Eugénie and the cousin from Paris. She saw how the heiress now and then stole a glance at her cousin, and the banker's wife could easily discover in those glances a *crescendo* of amazement or of curiosity.

There was certainly a strange contrast between M. Charles Grandet, a handsome young man of two-and-twenty, and the worthy provincials, who, tolerably disgusted already with his aristocratic airs, were scornfully studying the stranger with a view to making game of him. This requires some explanation.

At two-and-twenty childhood is not so very far away, and youth, on the borderland, has not finally and forever put away childish things; Charles Grandet's vanity was childish, but perhaps ninety-nine young men out of a hundred would have been carried away by it and behaved exactly as he did.

Some days previously his father had bidden him to go on a visit of several months to his uncle in Saumur; perhaps M. Grandet (of Paris) had Eugénie in his mind. Charles, launched in this way into a country town for the first time in his life, had his own ideas. He would make his appearance in provincial society with all the superiority of a young man of fashion; he would reduce the neighborhood to despair by his splendor; he would inaugurate a new epoch, and

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introduce all the latest and most ingenious refinement of Parisian luxury. To be brief, he meant to devote more time at Saumur than in Paris to the care of his nails, and to carry out schemes of elaborate and studied refinements in dress at his leisure; there should be none of the not ungraceful negligence of attire which a young man of fashion sometimes affects.

So Charles took with him into the country the most charming of shooting costumes, the sweetest thing in hunting-knives and sheaths, and a perfect beauty of a rifle. He packed up a most tasteful collection of waistcoats; gray, white, black, beetle-green shot with gold, speckled and spangled; double waistcoats, waistcoats with rolled collars, stand-up collars, turned-down collars, open at the throat, buttoned up to the chin with a row of gold buttons. He took examples of all the ties and cravats in favor at that epoch. He took two of Buisson's coats. He took his finest linen, and the dressing-case with gold fittings that his mother had given him. He took all his dandy's paraphernalia, not forgetting an enchanting little writing-case, the gift of the most amiable of women (for him at least), a great lady whom he called Annette, and who at that moment was traveling with her husband in Scotland, a victim to suspicions which demanded the temporary sacrifice of her happiness.

In short, his cargo of Parisian frivolities was as complete as it was possible to make it; nothing had been omitted, from the horse-whip, useful as a preliminary, to the pair of richly chased and mounted pistols that terminate a duel. There was all the ploughing gear required by a young idler in the field of life.

His father had told him to travel alone and modestly, and he had obeyed. He had come in the coupé of the diligence, which he secured all to himself; and was not ill-satisfied to save wear, in this way, to a smart and comfortable traveling carriage which he had ordered, and in which he meant to go to meet his Annette, the aforesaid great lady who . . . etc., and whom he was to rejoin next June at Baden-Baden.

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Charles expected to meet scores of people during his visit to his uncle; he expected to have some shooting on his uncle's land; he expected, in short, to find a large house on a large estate; he had not thought to find his relatives in Saumur at all; he had only found out that they lived there by asking the way to Froidfond, and even after this discovery he expected to see them in a large mansion. But whether his uncle lived in Saumur or at Froidfond, he was determined to make his first appearance properly, so he had assumed a most fascinating traveling costume, made with the simplicity that is the perfection of art, a most *adorable* creation, to use the word which in those days expressed superlative praise of the special qualities of a thing or of a man. At Tours he had summoned a hairdresser, and his handsome chestnut hair was curled afresh. He had changed his linen and put on a black satin cravat, which, in combination with a round collar, made a very becoming setting for a pale and satirical face. A long overcoat, fitting tightly at the waist, gave glimpses of a cashmere waistcoat with a rolled collar, and beneath this again a second waistcoat of some white material. His watch was carelessly thrust into a side pocket, and save in so far as a gold chain secured it to a buttonhole, its continuance there appeared to be purely accidental. His gray trousers were buttoned at the sides, and the seams were adorned with designs embroidered in black silk. A pair of gray gloves had nothing to dread from contact with a gold-headed cane, which he managed to admiration. A discriminating taste was evinced throughout the costume, and shone conspicuous in the traveling cap. Only a Parisian, and a Parisian moreover from some remote and lofty sphere, could trick himself out in such attire, and bring all its absurd details into harmony by coxcombry carried to such a pitch that it ceased to be ridiculous; this young man carried it off, moreover, with a swaggering air befitting a dead shot, conscious of the possession of a handsome pair of pistols and the good graces of an Annette.

If, moreover, you wish to thoroughly understand the sur-

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prise with which the Saumurois and the young Parisian mutually regarded each other, you must behold, as did the former, the radiant vision of this elegant traveler shining in the gloomy old room, as well as the figures that composed the family picture that met the stranger's eyes. There sat the Cruchots; try to imagine them.

To begin with, all three took snuff, with utter disregard of personal cleanliness or of the black deposit with which their shirt frills were encrusted. Their limp silk handkerchiefs were twisted into a thick rope, and wound tightly about their necks. Their collars were crumpled and soiled, their linen was dingy; there was such a vast accumulation of underwear in their presses, that it was only necessary to wash twice in the year, and the linen acquired a bad color with lying by. Age and ugliness might have wrought together to produce a masterpiece in them. Their hard-featured, furrowed, and wrinkled faces were in keeping with their creased and threadbare clothing, and both they and their garments were worn, shrunken, twisted out of shape. Dwellers in country places are apt to grow more or less slovenly and careless in their appearance; they cease by degrees to dress for others; the career of a pair of gloves is indefinitely prolonged, there is a general want of freshness and a decided neglect of detail. The slovenliness of the Cruchots, therefore, was not conspicuous; they were in harmony with the rest of the company, for there was one point on which both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed for the most part—they held the fashions in horror.

The Parisian assumed his eyeglass again in order to study the curious accessories of the room; his eyes traveled over the rafters in the ceiling, over the dingy panels covered with fly-spots in sufficient abundance to punctuate the whole of the *Encyclopédie méthodique* and the *Moniteur* besides. The loto-players looked up at this and stared at him; if a giraffe had been in their midst they could hardly have gazed with more eager curiosity. Even M. des Grassins and his son, who had beheld a man of fashion before in the course of their

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lives, shared in the general amazement; perhaps they felt the indefinable influence of the general feeling about the stranger, perhaps they regarded him not unapprovingly. "You see how they dress in Paris," their satirical glances seemed to say to their neighbors.

One and all were at liberty to watch Charles at their leisure, without any fear of offending the master of the house, for by this time Grandet was deep in a long letter which he held in his hand. He had taken the only candle from the table beside him, without any regard for the convenience of his guests or for their pleasure.

It seemed to Eugénie, who had never in her life beheld such a paragon, that her cousin was some seraphic vision, some creature fallen from the skies. The perfume exhaled by those shining locks, so gracefully curled, was delightful to her. She would fain have passed her fingers over the delicate, smooth surface of those wonderful gloves. She envied Charles his little hands, his complexion, the youthful refinement of his features. In fact, the sight of her cousin gave her the same sensations of exquisite pleasure that might be aroused in a young man by the contemplation of the fanciful portraits of ladies in English *Keepsakes,* portraits drawn by Westall and engraved by Finden, with a burin so skilful that you fear to breathe upon the vellum surface lest the celestial vision should disappear. And yet—how should the impression produced by a young exquisite upon an ignorant girl whose life was spent in darning stockings and mending her father's clothes, in the dirty wainscoted window embrasure whence, in an hour, she saw scarcely one passer-by in the silent street, how should her dim impressions be conveyed by such an image as this?

Charles drew from his pocket a handkerchief embroidered by the great lady who was traveling in Scotland. It was a dainty piece of work wrought by love, in hours that were lost to love; Eugénie gazed at her cousin, and wondered, was he really going to use it? Charles' manners, his way of adjusting his eyeglass, his superciliousness, his affectations,

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his manifest contempt for the little box which had but lately given so much pleasure to the wealthy heiress, and which in his eyes seemed to be a very absurd piece of rubbish; everything, in short, which had given offence to the Cruchots and the Grassinistes pleased Eugénie so much that she lay awake for long that night thinking about this phœnix of a cousin.

Meanwhile the numbers were drawn but languidly, and very soon the loto came to an end altogether. Big Nanon came into the room and said aloud, "Madame, you will have to give me some sheets to make the gentleman's bed."

Mme. Grandet disappeared with Nanon, and Mme. des Grassins said in a low voice, "Let us keep our sous, and give up the game."

Each player took back his coin from the chipped saucer which held the stakes. Then there was a general stir, and a wheeling movement in the direction of the fire.

"Is the game over?" inquired Grandet, still reading his letter.

"Yes, yes," answered Mme. des Grassins, seating herself next to Charles.

Eugénie left the room to help her mother and Nanon, moved by a thought that came with the vague feeling that stirred her heart for the first time. If she had been questioned by a skilful confessor, she would have no doubt admitted that her thought was neither for Nanon nor for her mother, but that she was seized with a restless and urgent desire to see that all was right in her cousin's room, to busy herself on her cousin's account, to see that nothing was forgotten, to think of everything he might require, and to make sure that it was there, to make certain that everything was as neat and pretty as might be. She alone, so Eugénie thought already, could enter into her cousin's ideas and understand his tastes.

As a matter of fact, she came just at the right moment. Her mother and Nanon were about to leave the room in the belief that it was all in readiness; Eugénie convinced them in a moment that everything was yet to do. She filled

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Nanon's head with these ideas: the sheets had not been aired, Nanon must bring the warming-pan, there were ashes, there was a fire downstairs. She herself covered the old table with a clean white cloth, and told Nanon to mind and be sure to change it every morning. There must be a good fire in the room; she overcame her mother's objections; she induced Nanon to put a good supply of firewood outside in the passage, and to say nothing about it to her father. She ran downstairs into the parlor, sought in one of the sideboards for an old japanned tray which had belonged to the late M. de la Bertellière, and from the same source she procured a hexagonal crystal glass, a little gilt spoon with almost all the gilding rubbed off, and an old slender-necked glass bottle with Cupids engraved upon it; these she deposited in triumph on a corner of the chimney-piece. More ideas had crowded up in her mind during that one quarter of an hour than in all the years since she had come into the world.

"Mamma," she began, "he will never be able to bear the smell of a tallow candle. Suppose that we buy a wax candle?"

She fled, lightly as a bird, to find her purse, and drew thence the five francs which she had received for the month's expenses.

"Here, Nanon, be quick."

"But what will your father say?"

This dreadful objection was raised by Mme. Grandet when she saw her daughter with an old Sèvres china sugar-basin which Grandet had brought back with him from the château at Froidfond.

"And where is the sugar to come from?" she went on. "Are you mad?"

"Nanon can easily buy the sugar when she goes for the candle, mamma."

"But how about your father?"

"Is it a right thing that his nephew should not have a glass of *eau sucrée* to drink if he happens to want it? Besides, he will not notice it."

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"Your father always notices things," said Mme. Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated; she knew her master.

"Do go, Nanon; it is my birthday to-day, you know!"

Nanon burst out laughing in spite of herself at the first joke her young mistress had ever been known to make, and did her bidding.

While Eugénie and her mother were doing their best to adorn the room which M. Grandet had allotted to his nephew, Mme. des Grassins was bestowing her attention on Charles, and making abundant use of her eyes as she did so.

"You are very brave," she said, "to leave the pleasures of the capital in winter in order to come to stay in Saumur. But if you are not frightened away at first sight of us, you shall see that even here we can amuse ourselves." And she gave him a languishing glance, in true provincial style.

Women in the provinces are wont to affect a demure and staid demeanor, which gives a furtive and eager eloquence to their eyes, a peculiarity which may be noted in ecclesiastics, for whom every pleasure is stolen or forbidden. Charles was so thoroughly out of his element in this room, it was all so far removed from the great château and the splendid surroundings in which he had thought to find his uncle, that, on paying closer attention to Mme. des Grassins, she almost reminded him of Parisian faces half obliterated already by these strange new impressions. He responded graciously to the advances which had been made to him, and naturally they fell into conversation.

Mme. des Grassins gradually lowered her voice to tones suited to the nature of her confidences. Both she and Charles Grandet felt a need of mutual confidence, of explanations and an understanding; so after a few minutes spent in coquettish chatter and jests that covered a serious purpose, the wily provincial dame felt free to converse without fear of being overheard, under cover of a conversation on the sale of the vintage, the one all-absorbing topic at that moment in Saumur.

"If you will honor us with a visit," she said, "you will

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certainly do us a pleasure; my husband and I shall be very glad to see you. Our salon is the only one in Saumur where you will meet both the wealthy merchant society and the noblesse. We ourselves belong in a manner to both; they do not mix with each other at all except at our house; they come to us because they find it amusing. My husband, I am proud to say, is very highly thought of in both circles. So we will do our best to beguile the tedium of your stay. If you are going to remain with the Grandets, what will become of you! *Bon Dieu!* Your uncle is a miser, his mind runs on nothing but his vine cuttings; your aunt is a saint who cannot put two ideas together; and your cousin is a silly little thing, a common sort of a girl, with no breeding and no money, who spends her life in mending dish-cloths."

"'Tis a very pretty woman," said Charles to himself; Mme. des Grassins' coquettish glances had not been thrown away upon him.

"It seems to me that you mean to monopolize the gentleman," said the big banker, laughing, to his wife, an unlucky observation, followed by remarks more or less spiteful from the notary and the president; but the Abbé gave them a shrewd glance, took a pinch of snuff, and handed his snuff-box to the company, while he gave expression to their thoughts, "Where could the gentleman have found any one better qualified to do the honors of Saumur?" he said.

"Come, Abbé, what do you mean by that?" asked M. des Grassins.

"It is meant, sir, in the most flattering sense, for you, for madame, for the town of Saumur, and for this gentleman," added the shrewd ecclesiastic, turning toward Charles. Without appearing to pay the slightest heed to their talk, he had managed to guess the drift of it.

Adolphe des Grassins spoke at last, with what was meant to be an offhand manner. "I do not know," he said, addressing Charles, "whether you have any recollection of me; I once had the pleasure of dancing in the same quadrille at a ball given by M. le Baron de Nucingen, and . . ."

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"I remember it perfectly," answered Charles, surprised to find himself the object of general attention.

"Is this gentleman your son?" he asked of Mme. des Grassins.

The Abbé gave her a spiteful glance.

"Yes, I am his mother," she answered.

"You must have been very young when you came to Paris?" Charles went on, speaking to Adolphe.

"We cannot help ourselves, sir," said the Abbé. "Our babes are scarcely weaned before we send them to Babylon."

Mme. des Grassins gave the Abbé a strangely penetrating glance; she seemed to be seeking the meaning of those words.

"You must go into the country," the Abbé went on, "if you want to find women not much on the other side of thirty, with a grown-up son a licentiate of law, who look as fresh and youthful as Mme. des Grassins. It only seems like the other day when the young men and the ladies stood on chairs to see you dance, madame," the Abbé added, turning towards his fair antagonist; "your triumphs are as fresh in my memory as if they had happened yesterday."

"Oh! the old wretch!" said Mme. des Grassins to herself, "is it possible that he has guessed?"

"It looks as though I should have a great success in Saumur," thought Charles. He unbuttoned his overcoat and stood with his hand in his waistcoat pocket, gazing into space, striking the attitude which Chantrey thought fit to give to Byron in his statue of that poet.

Meanwhile Grandet's inattention, or rather his preoccupation, during the reading of his letter, had escaped neither the notary nor the magistrate. Both of them tried to guess at the contents by watching the almost imperceptible changes in the worthy man's face, on which all the light of a candle was concentrated. The vinegrower was hard put to it to preserve his wonted composure. His expression must be left to the imagination, but here is the fatal letter:—

"My Brother,—It is nearly twenty-three years now since we saw each other. The last time we met it was to make

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arrangements for my marriage, and we parted in high spirits Little did I then think, when you were congratulating yourself on our prosperity, that one day you would be the sole hope and stay of our family. By the time that this letter reaches your hands, I shall be no more. In my position, I could not survive the disgrace of bankruptcy; I have held up my head above the surface till the last moment, hoping to weather the storm; it is all of no use, I must sink now. Just after the failure of my stockbroker came the failure of Roguin (my notary); my last resources have been swept away, and I have nothing left. It is my heavy misfortune to owe nearly four millions; my assets only amount to twenty-five per cent of my debts. I hold heavy stocks of wine, and owing to the abundance and good quality of your vintages, they have fallen ruinously in value. In three days time all Paris will say, 'M. Grandet was a rogue!' and I, honest though I am, shall lie wrapped in a winding sheet of infamy. I have despoiled my own son of his mother's fortune and of the spotless name on which I have brought disgrace. He knows nothing of all this—the unhappy child whom I have idolized. Happily for him, he did not know when we bade each other good-bye, and my heart overflowed with tenderness for him, how soon it should cease to beat. Will he not curse me some day? Oh! my brother, my brother, a child's curse is an awful thing! If we curse the children, they may appeal against us, but their curses cling to us forever! Grandet, you are my older brother, you must shield me from this; do not let Charles say bitter things of me when I am lying in my grave. Oh! my brother, if every word in this letter were written in my tears, in my blood, it would not cost me such bitter anguish, for then I should be weeping, bleeding, dying, and the agony would be ended; but now I am still suffering—I see the death before me with dry eyes. You therefore are Charles' father, now! He has no relations on his mother's side for reasons which you know. Why did I not defer to social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry the natural daughter of a noble? Charles is the

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last of his family; he is alone in the world. Oh! my unhappy boy! my son! . . . Listen, Grandet, I am asking nothing for myself, and you could scarcely satisfy my creditors if you would; your fortune cannot be sufficient to meet a demand of three millions; it is for my son's sake that I write. You must know, my brother, that as I think of you, my petition is made with clasped hands; that this is my dying prayer to you. Grandet, I know that you will be a father to him; I know that I shall not ask in vain, and the sight of my pistols does not cause me a pang.

"And then Charles is very fond of me; I was kind to him, I never said him nay; he will not curse me! For the rest, you will see how sweet-tempered and obedient he is; he takes after his mother; he will never give you any trouble, poor boy! He is accustomed to luxurious ways; he knows nothing of the hardships that you and I experienced in the early days when we were poor. . . . And now he has not a penny, and he is alone in the world, for all his friends are sure to leave him, and it is I who have brought these humiliations upon him. Ah! if I had only the power to send him straight to heaven now, where his mother is! This is madness! To go back to my misfortunes and Charles' share in them. I have sent him to you so that you may break the news of my death and explain to him what his future must be. Be a father to him; ah! more than that, be an indulgent father! Do not expect him to give up his idle ways all at once; it would kill him. On my knees I beg him to renounce all claims to his mother's fortune; but I need not ask that of him, his sense of honor will prevent him from adding himself to the list of my creditors; see that he resigns his claims when the right time comes. And you must lay everything before him, Grandet—the struggle and the hardships that he will have to face in the life that I have spoiled for him; and then if he has any tenderness still left for me, tell him from me that all is not lost for him—be sure you tell him that. Work, which was our salvation, can restore the fortune which I have lost; and if he will listen to his father's voice, which

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would fain make itself heard yet a little while from the grave, let him leave this country and go to the Indies! And, brother, Charles is honest and energetic; you will help him with his first trading venture, I know you will; he would die sooner than not repay you; you will do as much as that for him, Grandet, or you will lay up regrets for yourself. Ah! if my boy finds no kindness and no help in you, I shall forever pray God to punish your hard-heartedness. If I could have withheld a few payments, I might have saved a little sum for him—he surely has a right to some of his mother's fortune—but the payments at the end of the month taxed all my resources, and I could not manage it. I would fain have died with my mind at rest about his future; I wish I could have received your solemn promise, coming straight from your hand it would have brought warmth with it for me; but time presses. Even while Charles is on his way, I am compelled to file my schedule. My affairs are all in order; I am endeavoring so to arrange everything that it will be evident that my failure is due neither to carelessness nor to dishonesty, but simply to disasters which I could not help. Is it not for Charles' sake that I take these pains? Farewell, my brother. May God bless you in every way for the generosity with which you (as I cannot doubt) will accept and fulfil this trust. There will be one voice that will never cease to pray for you in the world whither we must all go sooner or later, and where I am even now.

"VICTOR-ANGE-GUILLAUME GRANDET."

"So you are having a chat?" said old Grandet, folding up the letter carefully in the original creases, and putting it into his waistcoat pocket.

He looked at his nephew in a shy and embarrassed way, seeking to dissemble his feelings and his calculations.

"Do you feel warmer?"

"I am very comfortable, my dear uncle."

"Well, what ever are the women after?" his uncle went on; the fact that his nephew would sleep in the house had by that

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time slipped from his memory. Eugénie and Mme. Grandet came into the room as he spoke.

"Is everything ready upstairs?" the goodman inquired. He had now quite recovered himself, and recollected the facts of the case.

"Yes, father."

"Very well then, nephew, if you are feeling tired, Nanon will show you to your room. Lord! there is nothing very smart about it, but you will overlook that here among poor vinegrowers, who never have a penny to bless themselves with. The taxes swallow up everything we have."

"We don't want to be intrusive, Grandet," said the banker. "You and your nephew may have some things to talk over; we will wish you good evening. Good-bye till to-morrow."

Every one rose at this, and took leave after their several fashions. The old notary went out under the archway to look for his lantern, lighted it, and offered to see the des Grassins to their house. Mme. des Grassins had not been prepared for the event which had brought the evening so early to a close, and her maid had not appeared.

"Will you honor me by taking my arm, madame?" said the Abbé Cruchot, addressing Mme. des Grassins.

"Thank you, M. l'Abbé," said the lady dryly; "my son is with me."

"I am not a compromising acquaintance for a lady," the Abbé continued.

"Take M. Cruchot's arm," said her husband.

The Abbé, with the fair lady on his arm, walked on quickly for several paces, so as to put a distance between them and the rest of the party.

"That young man is very good-looking, madame," he said, with a pressure on her arm to give emphasis to the remark. "'Tis good-bye to the baskets, the vintage is over! You must give up Mlle. Grandet; Eugénie is meant for her cousin. Unless he happens to be smitten with some fair face in Paris, your son Adolphe will have yet another rival——"

"Nonsense, M. l'Abbé."

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"It will not be long before the young man will find out that Eugénie is a girl who has nothing to say for herself; and she has gone off in looks. Did you notice her? She was as yellow as a quince this evening."

"Which, possibly, you have already pointed out to her cousin?"

"Indeed, I have not taken the trouble——"

"If you always sit beside Eugénie, madame," interrupted the Abbé, "you will not need to tell the young man much about his cousin; he can make his own comparisons."

"He promised me at once to come to dine with us the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! madame," said the Abbé, "if you would only . . ."

"Would only what, M. l'Abbé? Do you mean to put evil suggestions into my mind? I have not come to the age of thirty-nine with a spotless reputation (Heaven be thanked) to compromise myself now—not for the Empire of the Great Mogul! We are both of us old enough to know what that kind of talk means; and I must say that your ideas do not square very well with your sacred calling. For shame! this is worthy of *Faublas*."

"So you have read *Faublas?*"

"No, M. l'Abbé; *Les Liaisons dangereuses* is what I meant to say."

"Oh! that book is infinitely more moral," said the Abbé, laughing. "But you would make me out to be as depraved as young men are nowadays. I only meant that you——"

"Do you dare to tell me that you meant no harm? The thing is plain enough. If that young fellow (who certainly is good-looking, that I grant you) paid court to me, it would not be for the sake of my interest with that cousin of his. In Paris, I know, there are tender mothers who sacrifice themselves thus for their children's happiness and welfare, but we are not in Paris, M. l'Abbé."

"No, madame."

"And," continued she, "neither Adolphe nor I would purchase a hundred millions at such a price."

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"Madame, I said nothing about a hundred millions. Perhaps such a temptation might have been too much for either of us. Still, in my opinion, an honest woman may indulge in a little harmless coquetry, in the strictest propriety; it is a part of her social duties, and——"

"You think so?"

"Do we not owe it to ourselves, madame, to endeavor to be as agreeable as possible to others? . . . Permit me to blow my nose. Take my word for it, madame," resumed the Abbé, "that he certainly regarded you with rather more admiration than he saw fit to bestow on me, but I can forgive him for honoring beauty rather than gray hairs——"

"It is perfectly clear," said the President in his thick voice, "why M. Grandet of Paris is sending his son to Saumur; he has made up his mind to make a match——"

"Then why should the cousin have dropped from the skies like this?" answered the notary.

"There is nothing in that," remarked M. des Grassins, "old Grandet is so close."

"Des Grassins," said his wife, "I have asked that young man to come and dine with us. So you must go to M. and Mme. de Larsonnière, dear, and ask them to come, and the du Hautoys; and they must bring that pretty girl of theirs, of course; I hope she will dress herself properly for once. Her mother is jealous of her, and makes her look such a figure. I hope that you gentlemen will do us the honor of coming too?" she added, stopping the procession in order to turn to the two Cruchots, who had fallen behind.

"Here we are at your door, madame," said the notary. The three Cruchots took leave of the three des Grassins, and on their way home the talent for pulling each other to pieces, which provincials possess in perfection, was fully called into play; the great event of the evening was exhaustively discussed, and all its bearings upon the respective positions of Cruchotins and Grassinistes were duly considered. Clearly it behooved both alike to prevent Eugénie from falling in love with her cousin, and to hinder Charles from thinking

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of Eugénie. Sly hints, plausible insinuations, faint praise, vindications undertaken with an air of candid friendliness—what resistance could the Parisian offer when the air hurtled with deceptive weapons such as these?

As soon as the four relatives were left alone in the great room, M. Grandet spoke to his nephew.

"We must go to bed. It is too late to begin to talk to-night of the business that brought you here; to-morrow will be time enough for that. We have breakfast here at eight o'clock. At noon we take a snatch of something, a little fruit, a morsel of bread, and a glass of white wine, and, like Parisians, we dine at five o'clock. That is the way of it. If you care to take a look at the town, or to go into the country round about, you are quite free to do so. You will excuse me if, for business reasons, I cannot always accompany you. Very likely you will be told hereabouts that I am rich: 'tis always M. Grandet here and M. Grandet there. I let them talk. Their babble does not injure my credit in any way. But I have not a penny to bless myself with; and, old as I am, I work like any young journeyman who has nothing in the world but his plane and a pair of stout arms. Perhaps you will find out for yourself some of these days what a lot of work it takes to earn a crown when you have to toil and moil for it yourself. Here, Nanon, bring the candles."

"I hope you will find everything you want, nephew," said Mme. Grandet; "but if anything has been forgotten, you will call Nanon."

"It would be difficult to want anything, my dear aunt, for I believe I have brought all my things with me. Permit me to wish you and my young cousin good night."

Charles took a lighted wax-candle from Nanon; it was a commodity of local manufacture, which had grown old in the shop, very dingy, very yellow, and so like the ordinary tallow variety that M. Grandet had no suspicion of the article of luxury before him; indeed, it never entered into his head to imagine that there could be such a thing in the house.

"I will show you the way," said the goodman.

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One of the doors in the dining-room gave immediate access to the archway and to the staircase; but to-night, out of compliment to his guest, Grandet went by way of the passage which separated the kitchen from the dining-room. A folding-door, with a large oval pane of glass let into it, closed in the passage at the end nearest the staircase, an arrangement intended to keep out the blasts of cold air that rushed through the archway. With a like end in view, strips of list had been nailed to the doors; but in winter the east wind found its way in, and whistled none the less shrewdly about the house, and the dining-room was seldom even tolerably warm.

Nanon went out, drew the bolts on the entrance gate, fastened the door of the dining-room, went across to the stable to let loose a great wolf-dog with a cracked voice; it sounded as though the animal was suffering from laryngitis. His savage temper was well known, and Nanon was the only human being who could manage him. There was some wild strain in both these children of the fields; they understood each other.

Charles glanced round at the dingy yellow walls and smoke-begrimed ceiling, and saw how the crazy, worm-eaten stairs shook beneath his uncle's heavy tread; he was fast coming to his senses, this was sober reality indeed! The place looked like a hen-roost. He looked round questioningly at the faces of his aunt and cousin, but they were so thoroughly accustomed to the staircase and its peculiarities that it never occurred to them that it could cause any astonishment; they took his signal of distress for a simple expression of friendliness, and smiled back at him in the most amiable way. That smile was the last straw; the young man was at his wits' end.

"What the devil made my father send me here?" said he to himself.

Arrived on the first landing, he saw before him three doors painted a dull red-brown color; there were no moldings round any of them, so that they would have been scarcely

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visible in the dust surface of the wall if it had not been for the very apparent heavy bars of iron with which they were embellished, and which terminated in a sort of rough ornamental design, as did the ends of the iron scutcheons which surrounded the keyholes. A door at the head of the stairs, which had once given entrance into the room over the kitchen, was evidently blocked up. As a matter of fact, the only entrance was through Grandet's own room, and this room over the kitchen was the vinegrower's sanctum.

Daylight was admitted into it by a single window which looked out upon the yard, and which, for greater security, was protected by a grating of massive iron bars. The master of the house allowed no one, not even Mme. Grandet, to set foot in this chamber; he kept the right of entry to himself, and sat there, undisturbed and alone, like an alchemist in the midst of his crucibles. Here, no doubt, there was some cunningly contrived and secret hiding-place; for here he stored up the title-deeds of his estates; here, too, he kept the delicately adjusted scales in which he weighed his gold louis; and here every night he made out receipts, wrote acknowledgments of sums received, and laid his schemes, so that other business men, seeing Grandet never busy, and always prepared for every emergency, might have been excused for imagining that he had a fairy or familiar spirit at his beck and call. Here, no doubt, when Nanon's snoring shook the rafters, when the savage watch-dog bayed and prowled about the yard, when Mme. Grandet and Eugénie were fast asleep, the old cooper would come to be with his gold, and hug himself upon it, and toy with it, and fondle it, and brood over it, and so, with the intoxication of the gold upon him, at last to sleep. The walls were thick, the closed shutters kept their secret. He alone had the key of this laboratory, where, if reports spoke truly, he pored over plans on which every fruit tree belonging to him was mapped out, so that he could reckon out his crops, so much to every vine stem; and his yield of timber, to a fagot.

The door of Eugénie's room was opposite this closed-up

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portal, the room occupied by M. and Mme. Grandet was at the end of the landing, and consisted of the entire front of the house. It was divided within by a partition. Mme. Grandet's chamber was next to Eugénie's, with which it communicated by a glass door; the other half of the room, separated from the mysterious cabinet by a thick wall, belonged to the master of the house. Goodman Grandet had cunningly lodged his nephew on the second story, in an airy garret immediately above his own room, so that he could hear every sound and inform himself of the young man's goings and comings, if the latter should take it into his head to leave his quarters.

Eugénie and her mother, arrived on the first landing, kissed each other, and said good night; they took leave of Charles in a few formal words, spoken with an apparent indifference, which in her heart the girl was far from feeling, and went to their rooms.

"This is your room, nephew," said Grandet, addressing Charles as he opened the door. "If you should wish to go out, you will have to call Nanon; for if you don't, it will be 'no more at present from your most obedient,' the dog will gobble you down before you know where you are. Good night, sleep well. Ha! ha! the ladies have lighted a fire in your room," he went on.

Just at that moment big Nanon appeared, armed with a warming-pan.

"Did any one ever see the like?" said M. Grandet. "Do you take my nephew for a sick woman? he is not an invalid. Just be off, Nanon! you and your hot ashes."

"But the sheets are damp, sir, and the gentleman looks as delicate as a woman."

"All right, go through with it, since you have taken it into your head," said Grandet, shrugging his shoulders, "but mind you don't set the place on fire," and the miser groped his way downstairs, muttering vaguely to himself.

Charles, breathless with astonishment, was left among his trunks. He looked round about him, at the sloping roof of

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the attic, at the wallpaper of a pattern peculiar to little country inns, bunches of flowers symmetrically arranged on a buff-colored background; he looked at the rough stone chimney-piece full of rifts and cracks (the mere sight of it sent a chill through him, in spite of the fire in the grate), at the ramshackle cane-seated chairs, at the open night-table large enough to hold a fair-sized sergeant-at-arms, at the strip of worn rag-carpet beside the canopied bedstead, at the curtains which shook every moment as if the whole worm-eaten structure would fall to pieces; finally, he turned his attention to big Nanon, and said earnestly—

"Look here, my good girl, am I really in M. Grandet's house? M. Grandet, formerly Mayor of Saumur, and brother of M. Grandet of Paris?"

"Yes, sir, you are; and you are staying with a very kind, a very amiable and excellent gentleman. Am I to help you to unpack those trunks of yours?"

"Faith, yes, old soldier, I wish you would. Did you serve in the horse marines?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" chuckled Nanon. "What may they be? What are the horse marines? Are they old salts? Do they go to sea?"

"Here, look out my dressing-gown; it is in that portmanteau, and this is the key."

Nanon was overcome with astonishment at the sight of a green silk dressing-gown, embroidered with gold flowers after an antique pattern.

"Are you going to sleep in *that?*" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Holy Virgin! What a beautiful altar cloth it would make for the parish church! Oh, my dear young gentleman, you should give it to the Church, and you will save your soul, which you are like to lose for that thing. Oh! how nice you look in it. I will go and call mademoiselle to look at you."

"Come now, Nanon, since that is your name, will you hold your tongue, and let me go to bed. I will set my things straight to-morrow, and as you have taken such a fancy to

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my gown, you shall have a chance to save your soul. I am too good a Christian to take it away with me when I go; you shall have it, and you can do whatever you like with it."

Nanon stood stock still, staring at Charles; she could not bring herself to believe that he really meant what he said.

"You are going to give that grand dressing-gown to *me!*" she said, as she turned to go. "The gentleman is dreaming already. Good night."

"Good night, Nanon.—What ever am I doing here?" said Charles to himself, as he dropped off to sleep. "My father is no fool; I have not been sent here for nothing. Pooh! 'serious business to-morrow,' as some old Greek wiseacre used to say."

"*Sainte Vierge!* how nice he is!" said Eugénie to herself in the middle of her prayers, and that night they remained unfinished.

Mme. Grandet alone lay down to rest, with no thought in her quiet mind. Through the door in the thin partition she could hear her husband pacing to and fro in his room. Like all sensitive and timid women, she had thoroughly studied the character of her lord and master. Just as the sea-mew foresees the coming storm, she knew by almost imperceptible signs that a tempest was raging in Grandet's mind, and, to use her own expression, she "lay like one dead" at such seasons. Grandet's eyes turned towards his sanctum; he looked at the door, which was lined with sheet iron on the inner side (he himself had seen to that), and muttered, "What a preposterous notion this is of my brother's, to leave his child to me! A pretty legacy! I haven't twenty crowns to spare, and what would twenty crowns be to a popinjay like that, who looked at my weather-glass as if it wasn't fit to light the fire with?"

And Grandet, meditating on the probable outcome of this mournful dying request, was perhaps more perturbed in spirit than the brother who had made it.

"Shall I really have that golden gown?" Nanon said, and she fell asleep wrapped around in her altar cloth, dreaming

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for the first time in her life of shining embroideries and flowered brocade, just as Eugénie dreamed of love.

In a girl's innocent and uneventful life there comes a mysterious hour of joy when the sunlight spreads through the soul, and it seems to her that the flowers express the thoughts that rise within her, thoughts that are quickened by every heart beat, only to blend in a vague feeling of longing, when the days are filled with innocent melancholy and delicious happiness. Children smile when they see the light for the first time, and when a girl dimly divines the presence of love in the world she smiles as she smiled in her babyhood. If light is the first thing that we learn to love, is not love like light in the heart? This moment had come for Eugénie; she saw the things of life clearly for the first time.

Early rising is the rule in the country, so, like most other girls, Eugénie was up betimes in the morning; this morning she rose earlier than usual, said her prayers, and began to dress; her toilette was henceforth to possess an interest unknown before. She began by brushing her chestnut hair, and wound the heavy plaits about her head, careful that no loose ends should escape from the braided coronet which made an appropriate setting for a face both frank and shy, a simple coiffure which harmonized with the girlish outlines.

As she washed her hands again and again in the cold spring water that roughened and reddened the skin, she looked down at her pretty rounded arms and wondered what her cousin did to have hands so soft and so white, and nails so shapely. She put on a pair of new stockings, and her best shoes, and laced herself carefully, without passing over a single eyelet-hole. For the first time in her life, in fact, she wished to look her best, and felt that it was pleasant to have a pretty new dress to wear, a becoming dress which was nicely made.

The church clock struck just as she had finished dressing; she counted the strokes, and was surprised to find that it was still only seven o'clock. She had been so anxious to have plenty of time for her toilette, that she had risen too early,

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and now there was nothing left to do. Eugénie, in her ignorance, never thought of studying the position of a tress of hair, and of altering it a dozen times to criticise its effect; she simply folded her arms, sat down by the window, and looked out upon the yard, the long strip of garden, and the terraced gardens up above upon the ramparts.

It was a somewhat dreary outlook thus shut in by the grim rock walls, but not without a charm of its own, the mysterious beauty of quiet over-shaded gardens, or of wild and solitary places. Under the kitchen window there was a well with a stone coping round it; a pulley was suspended above the water from an iron bracket overgrown by a vine; the vine-leaves were red and faded now that the autumn was nearly at an end, and the crooked stem was plainly visible as it wound its way to the house wall, and crept along the house till it came to an end by the wood stack, where the fagots were arranged with as much neatness and precision as the volumes on some book-lover's shelves. The flag-stones in the yard were dark with age and mosses, and dank with the stagnant air of the place; weeds grew here and there among the chinks. The massive outworks of the old fortifications were green with moss, with here and there a long dark-brown streak where water dripped, and the eight tumble-down steps, which gave access to the garden at the further end of the yard, were almost hidden by a tall growth of plants; the general effect of the crumbling stones had a vague resemblance to some crusader's tomb erected by his widow in the days of yore and long since fallen into ruin.

Along the low mouldering stone wall there was a fence of open lattice-work, rotten with age, and fast falling to pieces; overrun by various creeping plants that clambered over it at their own sweet will. A couple of stunted apple trees spread out their gnarled and twisted branches on either side of the wicket gate that led into the garden—three straight gravel walks with strips of border in between, and a line of box-edging on either side; and, at the further end, underneath the ramparts, a sort of arbor of lime trees, and a row of rasp-

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berry canes. A huge walnut tree grew at the end nearest to the house, and almost overshadowed the cooper's strong room with its spreading branches.

It was one of those soft, bright, autumn mornings peculiar to the districts along the Loire; there was not a trace of mist; the light frosty rime of the previous night was rapidly disappearing as the mild rays of the autumn sun shone on the picturesque surroundings, the old walls, the green tangled growth in the yard and garden.

All these things had been long familiar to Eugénie's eyes, but to-day it seemed to her that there was a new beauty about them. A throng of confused thoughts filled her mind as the sunbeams overflowed the world without. A vague, inexplicable new happiness stirred within her, and enveloped her soul, as a bright cloud might cling about some object in the material world. The quaint garden, the old walls, every detail in her little world seemed to be living through this new experience with her; the nature without her was in harmony with her inmost thoughts. The sunlight crept along the wall till it reached a maiden-hair fern; the changing hues of a pigeon's breast shone from the thick fronds and glossy stems, and all Eugénie's future grew bright with radiant hopes. Henceforward the bit of wall, its pale flowers, its blue harebells and bleached grasses, was a pleasant sight for her; it called up associations which had all the charm of the memories of childhood.

The rustling sound made by the leaves as they fell to the earth, the echoes that came up from the court, seemed like answers to the girl's secret questionings as she sat and mused; she might have stayed there by the window all day and never have noticed how the hours went by, but other thoughts surged up within her soul. Again and again she rose and stood before the glass, and looked at herself, as a conscientious writer scrutinizes his work, criticises it, and says hard things about it to himself.

"I am not pretty enough for him!"

This was what Eugénie thought, in her humility, and the

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thought was fertile in suffering. The poor child did not do herself justice; but humility, or more truly, fear, is born with love. Eugénie's beauty was of a robust type often found among the lower middle classes, a type which may seem somewhat wanting in refinement, but in her the beauty of the Venus of Milo was ennobled and purified by the beauty of Christian sentiment, which invests woman with a dignity unknown to ancient sculptors. Her head was very large; the masculine but delicate outlines of her forehead recalled the Jupiter of Phidias; all the radiance of her pure life seemed to shine from the clear gray eyes. An attack of smallpox, so mild that it had left no scars on the oval face or features, had yet somewhat blurred their fresh, fair coloring, and coarsened the smooth and delicate surface, still so fine and soft that her mother's gentle kiss left a passing trace of faint red on her cheek. Perhaps her nose was a little too large, but it did not contradict the kindly and affectionate expression of the mouth, and the red lips covered with finely-etched lines. Her throat was daintily rounded. There was something that attracted attention and stirred the imagination in the curving lines of her figure, covered to the throat by her high-necked dress; no doubt she possessed little of the grace that is due to the toilette, and her tall frame was strong rather than lissome, but this was not without its charm for judges of beauty.

For Eugénie was both tall and strongly built. She had nothing of the prettiness that ordinary people admire; but her beauty was unmistakable, and of a kind in which artists alone delight. A painter in quest of an exalted and spiritual type, searching women's faces for the beauty which Raphael dreamed of and conjured into being, the eyes full of proud humility, the pure outlines, often due to some chance inspiration of the artist, but which a virtuous and Christian life can alone acquire or preserve,—a painter haunted by this ideal would have seen at once in Eugénie Grandet's face her unconscious and innate nobility of soul, a world of love behind the quiet brow, and in the way she had with her eye-

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lids and in her eyes that divine something which baffles description. There was a serene tranquillity about her features, unspoiled and unwearied by the expression of pleasure; it was as if you watched, across some placid lake, the shadowy outlines of hills far off against the sky. The beauty of Eugénie's face, so quiet and so softly colored, was like that of some fair, half-opened flower about which the light seems to hover; in its quality of restfulness, its subtle revelation of a beautiful nature, lay the charm that attracted beholders. Eugénie was still on the daisied brink of life, where illusions blossom and joys are gathered which are not known in later days. So she looked in the glass, and with no thought of love as yet in her mind, she said, "He will not give me a thought; I am too ugly!"

Then she opened her door, went out on to the landing, and bent over the staircase to hear the sounds in the house.

"He is not getting up yet," she thought. She heard Nanon's morning cough as the good woman went to and fro, swept out the dining-room, lit the kitchen fire, chained up the dog, and talked to her friends the brutes in the stable.

Eugénie fled down the staircase, and ran over to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

"Nanon," she cried, "do let us have some cream for my cousin's coffee, there's a dear."

"But, mademoiselle, you can't have cream off this morning's milk," said Nanon, as she burst out laughing. "I can't make cream for you. Your cousin is as charming as charming can be, that he is! You haven't seen him in that silk night rail of his, all flowers and gold! I did though! The linen he wears is every bit as fine as M. le Curé's surplice."

"Nanon, make some cake for us."

"And who is to find the wood to heat the oven, and the flour and the butter?" asked Nanon, who in her capacity of Grandet's prime minister was a person of immense importance in Eugénie's eyes, and even in Eugénie's mother's. "Is *he* to be robbed to make a feast for your cousin? Ask for the butter and the flour and the firewood; he is your father, go

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and ask him, he may give them to *you*. There! there he is, just coming downstairs to see after the provisions——"

But Eugénie had escaped into the garden; the sound of her father's footstep on the creaking staircase terrified her. She was conscious of a happiness that shrank from the observation of others, a happiness which, as we are apt to think, and perhaps not without reason, shines from our eyes, and is written at large upon our foreheads. And not only so, she was conscious of other thoughts. The bleak discomfort of her father's house had struck her for the first time, and, with a dim feeling of vexation, the poor child wished that she could alter it all, and bring it more into harmony with her cousin's elegance. She felt a passionate longing to do something for him, without the slightest idea what that something should be. The womanly instinct awakened in her at the first sight of her cousin was only the stronger because she had reached her three-and-twentieth year, and mind and heart were fully developed; and she was so natural and simple that she acted on the promptings of her angelic nature without submitting herself, her impressions, or her feelings to any introspective process.

For the first time in her life the sight of her father struck a sort of terror into her heart; she felt that he was the master of her fate, and that she was guiltily hiding some of her thoughts from him. She began to walk hurriedly up and down, wondering how it was that the air was so fresh; there was a reviving force in the sunlight, it seemed to be within her as well as without, it was as if a new life had begun.

While she was still thinking how to gain her end concerning the cake, a quarrel came to pass between Nanon and Grandet, a thing as rare as a winter swallow. The goodman had just taken his keys, and was about to dole out the provisions required for the day.

"Is there any bread left over from yesterday?" he asked of Nanon.

"Not a crumb, sir."

Grandet took up a large loaf, round in form and close in

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consistence, shaped in one of the flat baskets which they use for baking in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon broke in upon him with—

"There are five of us to-day, sir."

"True," answered Grandet; "but these loaves of yours weigh six pounds apiece; there will be some left over. Besides, these young fellows from Paris never touch bread, as you will soon see."

"Then do they eat *'kitchen?'* " asked Nanon.

This word *kitchen* in the Angevin dictionary signifies anything which is spread upon bread; from butter, the commonest variety, to preserved peaches, the most distinguished of all *kitchens;* and those who, as small children, have nibbled off the *kitchen* and left the bread, will readily understand the bearing of Nanon's remark.

"No," replied Grandet with much gravity, "they eat neither bread nor *kitchen;* they are like a girl in love, as you may say."

Having at length cut down the day's rations to the lowest possible point, the miser was about to go to his fruit-loft, first carefully locking up the cupboards of his storeroom, when Nanon stopped him.

"Just give me some flour and butter, sir," she said, "and I will make a cake for the children."

"Are you going to turn the house upside down because my nephew is here?"

"Your nephew was no more in my mind than your dog, no more than he was in yours. . . . There, now! you have only put out six lumps of sugar, and I want eight."

"Come, come, Nanon; I have never seen you like this before. What has come over you? Are you mistress here? You will have six lumps of sugar and no more."

"Oh, very well; and what is your nephew to sweeten his coffee with?"

"He can have two lumps; I shall go without it myself."

"*You* go without sugar! and at your age! I would sooner pay for it out of my own pocket."

"Mind your own business."

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In spite of the low price of sugar, it was, in Grandet's eyes, the most precious of all colonial products. For him it was always something to be used sparingly; it was still worth six francs a pound, as in the time of the Empire, and this petty economy had become an inveterate habit with him. But every woman, no matter how simple she may be, can devise some shift to gain her ends; and Nanon allowed the question of the sugar to drop, in order to have her way about the cake.

"Mademoiselle," she called through the window, "wouldn't you like some cake?"

"No, no," answered Eugénie.

"Stay, Nanon," said Grandet as he heard his daughter's voice; "there!"

He opened the flour-bin, measured out some flour, and added a few ounces of butter to the piece which he had already cut.

"And firewood; I shall want firewood to heat the oven," said the inexorable Nanon.

"Ah! well, you can take what you want," he answered ruefully; "but you will make a fruit tart at the same time, and you must bake the dinner in the oven, that will save lighting another fire."

"*Quien!*" cried Nanon; "there is no need to tell me that!"

Grandet gave his trusty prime minister a glance that was almost paternal.

"Mademoiselle," cried the cook, "we are going to have a cake."

Grandet came back again with the fruit, and began by setting down a plateful on the kitchen table.

"Just look here, sir," said Nanon, "what lovely boots your nephew has! What leather, how nice it smells! What are they to be cleaned with? Am I to put your egg-blacking on them?"

"No, Nanon," said Eugénie; "I expect the egg would spoil the leather. You had better tell him that you have no idea how to clean black morocco. . . . Yes, it is morocco, and he himself will buy you something in Saumur to clean

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his boots with. I have heard it said that they put sugar into their blacking, and that is what makes it so shiny."

"Then is it good to eat?" asked the maid, as she picked up the boots and smelt them. "*Quien, quien!* they smell of madame's eau-de-Cologne! Oh, how funny!"

"*Funny!*" said her master; "people spend more money on their boots than they are worth that stand in them, and you think it funny!" He had just returned from a second and final expedition to the fruit loft, carefully locking the door after him.

"You will have soup once or twice a week while your nephew is here, sir, will you not?"

"Yes."

"Shall I go round to the butcher's?"

"You will do nothing of the kind. You can make some chicken-broth; the tenants will keep you going. But I shall tell Cornoiller to kill some ravens for me. That kind of game makes the best broth in the world."

"Is it true, sir, that they live on dead things?"

"You are a fool, Nanon! They live, like everybody else, on anything that they can pick up. Don't we all live on dead things? What about legacies?" And Goodman Grandet, having no further order to give, drew out his watch, and finding that there was yet half an hour to spare before breakfast, took up his hat, gave his daughter a kiss, and said, "Would you like to take a walk along the Loire? I have something to see after in the meadows down there."

Eugénie put on her straw hat lined with rose-colored silk; and then father and daughter went down the crooked street towards the market-place.

"Where are you off to so early this morning?" said the notary Cruchot, as he met the Grandets.

"We are going to take a look at something," responded his friend, in no wise deceived by this early move on the notary's part.

Whenever Grandet was about to "take a look at something," the notary knew by experience that there was something to

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be gained by going with him. With him, therefore, he went.

"Come along, Cruchot," said Grandet, addressing the notary. "You are one of my friends; I am going to show you what a piece of folly it is to plant poplars in good soil——"

"Then the sixty thousand francs that you fingered for those poplars of yours in the meadows by the Loire are a mere trifle to you?" said Cruchot, opening his eyes wide in his bewilderment. "And such luck as you had too! . . . Felling your timber just when there was no white wood to be had in Nantes, so that every trunk fetched thirty francs!"

Eugénie heard and did not hear, utterly unconscious that the most critical moment of her life was rapidly approaching, that a paternal and sovereign decree was about to be pronounced, and that the old notary was to bring this all about. Grandet had reached the magnificent meadow-land by the Loire, which had come into his hands in his Republican days. Some thirty laborers were busy digging out the roots of the poplars that once stood there, filling up the holes that were left, and leveling the ground.

"Now, M. Cruchot, see how much space a poplar takes up," said he, addressing the notary. "Jean," he called to a workman, "m—m—measure r—round the sides with your rule."

"Eight feet four times over," said the workman when he had finished.

"Thirty-two feet of loss," said Grandet to Cruchot. "Now along that line there were three hundred poplars, weren't there? Well, then, three hundred t—t—times thirty-two f—feet will eat up five hundredweight of hay. Allow twice as much again for the space on either side, and you get fifteen hundredweight; then there is the intervening space—say a thousand t—t—trusses of hay altogether."

"Well," said Cruchot, helping his friend out, "and a thousand trusses of that hay would fetch something like six hundred francs."

"S—s—say t—twelve hundred, because the s—second crop is worth three or four hundred francs. Good, then reckon

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up what t—t—twelve hundred francs per annum d—d—during f—forty years comes to, at compound interest of course."

"Sixty thousand francs, or thereabouts," said the notary.

"That is what I make it! Sixty thousand f—f—francs. Well," the vinegrower went on without stammering, "two thousand poplars will not bring in fifty thousand francs in forty years. So you lose on them. That *I* found out," said Grandet, who was vastly pleased with himself. "Jean," he continued, turning to the laborer, "fill up all the holes except those along the riverside, where you can plant those poplar saplings that I bought. If you set them along by the Loire, they will grow there finely at the expense of the Government," he added, and as he looked round at Cruchot the wen on his nose twitched slightly; the most sardonic smile could not have said more.

"Yes, it is clear enough, poplars should only be planted in poor soil," said Cruchot, quite overcome with amazement at Grandet's astuteness.

"Y—e—s, sir," said the cooper ironically.

Eugénie was looking out over the glorious landscape and along the Loire, without heeding her father's arithmetic; but Cruchot's talk with his client took another turn, and her attention was suddenly aroused.

"So you have a son-in-law come from Paris; they are talking about nothing but your nephew in all Saumur. I shall soon have settlements to draw up; eh, père Grandet?"

"Did you come out early to t—t—tell me that?" inquired Grandet, and again the wen twitched. "Very well, you are an old crony of mine; I will be p—plain with you, and t—t—tell you what you w—want to know. I would rather fling my d—d—daughter into the Loire, look you, than g—give her to her cousin. You can give that out. But, no; l—l—let people gossip."

Everything swam before Eugénie's eyes. Her vague hopes of distant happiness had suddenly taken definite shape, had sprung up and blossomed, and then her harvest of flowers had been as suddenly cut down and lay on the earth. Since

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yesterday she had woven the bonds of happiness that unite two souls, and henceforward sorrow, it seemed, was to strengthen them. Is it not written in the noble destiny of woman that the grandeur of sorrow should touch her more closely than all the pomp and splendor of fortune?

How came it that a father's feelings had been extinguished (as it seemed) in her father's heart? What crime could be laid at Charles' door? Mysterious questions! Mysterious and sad forebodings already surrounded her growing love, that mystery within her soul. When they turned to go home again, she trembled in every limb; and as they went up the shady street, along which she had lately gone so joyously, the shadows looked gloomy, the air she breathed seemed full of the melancholy of autumn, everything about her was sad. Love, that had brought these keener perceptions, was quick to interpret every boding sign. As they neared home, she walked on ahead of her father, knocked at the house door, and stood waiting beside it. But Grandet, seeing that the notary carried a newspaper still in its wrapper, asked, "How are consols?"

"I know you will not take my advice, Grandet," Cruchot replied. "You should buy at once; the chance of making twenty per cent on them in two years is still open to you, and they pay a very fair rate of interest besides, five thousand livres is not a bad return on eighty thousand francs. You can buy now at eighty francs fifty centimes."

"We shall see," remarked Grandet pensively, rubbing his chin.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the notary, who by this time had unfolded his newspaper.

"Well, what is it?" cried Grandet as Cruchot put the paper in his hands and said—

"Read that paragraph."

"M. Grandet, one of the most highly respected merchants in Paris, shot himself through the head yesterday afternoon, after putting in an appearance on 'Change as usual. He had

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previously sent in his resignation to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, resigning his position as Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce at the same time. His affairs had become involved through the failures of his stockbroker and notary, MM. Roguin and Souchet. M. Grandet, whose character was very greatly esteemed, and whose credit stood high, would no doubt have found temporary assistance on the market which would have enabled him to tide over his difficulties. It is to be regretted that a man of such high character should have given way to the first impulse of despair"—and so forth, and so forth.

"I knew it," the old vinegrower said.

Phlegmatic though Cruchot was, he felt a horrible shudder run through him at the words; perhaps Grandet of Paris had stretched imploring hands in vain to the millions of Grandet of Saumur; the blood ran cold in his veins.

"And his son?" he asked presently; "he was in such spirits yesterday evening."

"His son knows nothing as yet," Grandet answered, imperturbable as ever.

"Good morning, M. Grandet," said Cruchot. He understood the position now, and went to reassure the President de Bonfons.

Grandet found breakfast ready. Mme. Grandet was already seated in her chair, mounted on the wooden blocks, and was knitting woolen cuffs for the winter. Eugénie ran to her mother and put her arms about her, with the eager hunger for affection that comes of a hidden trouble.

"You can get your breakfast," said Nanon, bustling downstairs in a hurry; "he is sleeping like a cherub. He looks so nice with his eyes shut! I went in and called him, but it was all one, he never heard me."

"Let him sleep," said Grandet; "he will wake soon enough to hear bad news, in any case."

"What is the matter?" asked Eugénie. She was putting into her cup the two smallest lumps of sugar, weighing good-

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ness knows how many grains; her worthy parent was wont to amuse himself by cutting up sugar whenever he had nothing better to do.

Mme. Grandet, who had not dared to put the question herself, looked at her husband.

"His father has blown his brains out."

"*My uncle?*" said Eugénie.

"Oh! that poor boy!" cried Mme. Grandet.

"Poor indeed!" said Grandet; "he has not a penny."

"Ah! well, he is sleeping as if he were the king of all the world," said Nanon pityingly.

Eugénie could not eat. Her heart was wrung as a woman's heart can be when for the first time her whole soul is filled with sorrow and compassion for the sorrow of one she loves. She burst into tears.

"You did not know your uncle, so what is there to cry about?" said her father with a glance like a hungry tiger's; just such a glance as he would give, no doubt, to his heaps of gold.

"But who wouldn't feel sorry for the poor young man, sir?" said the serving-maid; "sleeping there like a log, and knowing nothing of his fate."

"I did not speak to you, Nanon! Hold your tongue."

In that moment Eugénie learned that a woman who loves must dissemble her feelings. She was silent.

"Until I come back, Mme. Grandet, you will say nothing about this to him, I hope," the old cooper continued. "They are making a ditch in my meadows along the road, and I must go and see after it. I shall come back for the second breakfast at noon, and then my nephew and I will have a talk about his affairs. As for you, Mademoiselle Eugénie, if you are crying over that popinjay, let us have no more of it, child. He will be off posthaste to the Indies directly, and you will never set eyes on *him* any more."

Her father took up his gloves, which were lying on the rim of his hat, put them on in his cool, deliberate way, inserting the fingers of one hand between those of the other, dovetail

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fashion, so as to thrust them down well into the tips of the gloves, and then he went out.

"Oh! mamma, I can scarcely breathe!" cried Eugénie when she was alone with her mother; "I have never suffered like this!"

Mme. Grandet, seeing her daughter's white face, opened the window and let fresh air into the room.

"I feel better now," said Eugénie after a little.

This nervous excitement in one who was usually so quiet and self-possessed produced an effect on Mme. Grandet. She looked at her daughter, and her mother's love and sympathetic instinct told her everything. But, in truth, the celebrated Hungarian twin-sisters, united to each other by one of Nature's errors, could scarcely have lived in closer sympathy than Eugénie and her mother. Were they not always together; together in the window where they sat the livelong day, together at church? Did they not breathe the same air even when they slept?

"My poor little girl!" said Mme. Grandet, drawing Eugénie's head down till it rested upon her bosom.

Her daughter lifted her face, and gave her mother a questioning look which seemed to read her inmost thoughts.

"Why must he be sent to the Indies?" said the girl. "If he is in trouble, ought he not to stay here with us? Is he not our nearest relation?"

"Yes, dear child, that would only be natural; but your father has reasons for what he does, and we must respect them."

Mother and daughter sat in silence, the one on her chair mounted on the wooden blocks, the other in her little armchair. Both women took up their needlework. Eugénie felt that her mother understood her, and her heart was full of gratitude for such tender sympathy.

"How kind you are, dear mamma!" she said as she took her mother's hand and kissed it.

The worn, patient face, aged with many sorrows, lighted up at the words.

"Do you like him?" asked Eugénie.

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For all answer, Mme. Grandet smiled. Then after a moment's pause she murmured, "You cannot surely love him already? That would be a pity."

"Why would it be a pity?" asked Eugénie. "You like him, Nanon likes him, why should I not like him too? Now then, mamma, let us set the table for his breakfast."

She threw down her work, and her mother followed her example, saying as she did so, "You are a mad girl!"

But none the less she did sanction her daughter's freak by assisting in it.

Eugénie called Nanon.

"Haven't you all you want yet, mamselle?"

"Nanon, surely you will have some cream by twelve o'clock?"

"By twelve o'clock? Oh! yes," answered the old servant.

"Very well, then, let the coffee be very strong. I have heard M. des Grassins say that they drink their coffee very strong in Paris. Put in plenty."

"And where is it to come from?"

"You must buy some."

"And suppose the master meets me?"

"He is down by the river."

"I will just slip out then. But M. Fessard asked me when I went about the candle if the Three Holy Kings were paying us a visit. Our goings on will be all over the town."

"Your father would be quite capable of beating us," said Mme. Grandet, "if he suspected anything of all this."

"Oh! well, then, never mind; he will beat us, we will take the beating on our knees."

At this Mme. Grandet raised her eyes to heaven, and said no more. Nanon put on her sun-bonnet and went out. Eugénie spread a clean linen tablecloth, then she went upstairs in quest of some bunches of grapes which she had amused herself by hanging from some strings up in the attic. She tripped lightly along the corridor, so as not to disturb her cousin, and could not resist the temptation to stop a moment before the door to listen to his even breathing.

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"Trouble wakes while he is sleeping," she said to herself.

She arranged her grapes on the few last green vine leaves as daintily as any experienced *chef d'office,* and set them on the table in triumph. She levied contributions on the pears which her father had counted out, and piled them up pyramid fashion, with autumn leaves among them. She came and went, and danced in and out. She might have ransacked the house; the will was in nowise lacking, but her father kept everything under lock and key, and the keys were in his pocket. Nanon came back with two new-laid eggs. Eugénie could have flung her arms round the girl's neck.

"The farmer from La Lande had eggs in his basket; I asked him for some, and to please me he let me have these, the nice man."

After two hours of industrious application, Eugénie succeeded in preparing a very simple meal; it cost but little, it is true, but it was a terrible infringement of the immemorial laws and customs of the house. No one sat down to the midday meal, which consisted of a little bread, some fruit or butter, and a glass of wine. Twenty times in those two hours Eugénie had left her work to watch the coffee boil, or to listen for any sound announcing that her cousin was getting up; now looking round on the table drawn up to the fire, with one of the armchairs set beside it for her cousin, on the two plates of fruit, the egg-cups, the bottle of white wine, the bread, and the little pyramid of white sugar in a saucer; Eugénie trembled from head to foot at the mere thought of the glance her father would give her if he should happen to come in at that moment. Often, therefore, did she look at the clock, to see if there was yet time for her cousin to finish his breakfast before her parent's return.

"Never mind, Eugénie, if your father comes in, I will take all the blame," said Mme. Grandet.

Eugénie could not keep back the tears. "Oh! my kind mother," she cried; "I have not loved you enough!"

Charles, after making innumerable pirouettes around his room, came down at last, singing gay little snatches of song.

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Luckily it was only eleven o'clock after all. He had taken as much pains with his appearance (the Parisian!) as if he had been staying in the château belonging to the high-born fair one who was traveling in Scotland; and now he came in with that gracious air of condescension which sits not ill on youth, and which gave Eugénie a melancholy pleasure. He had come to regard the collapse of his castles in Anjou as a very good joke, and went up to his aunt quite gaily.

"I hope you slept well, dear aunt? And you too, cousin?"

"Very well, sir; how did you sleep?"

"Soundly."

"Cousin, you must be hungry," said Eugénie; "sit down."

"Oh! I never breakfast before twelve o'clock, just after I rise. But I have fared so badly on my journey, that I will yield to persuasion. Besides——" he drew out the daintiest little watch that ever issued from Bréguet's workshop. "Dear me, it is only eleven o'clock; I have been up betimes."

"Up betimes?" asked Mme. Grandet.

"Yes, but I wanted to set my things straight. Well, I am quite ready for something, something not very substantial, a fowl or a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, hearing these words.

"A partridge," Eugénie said to herself. She would willingly have given all she had for one.

"Come and take your seat," said Mme. Grandet, addressing her nephew.

The dandy sank into the armchair in a graceful attitude, much as a pretty woman might recline on her sofa. Eugénie and her mother drew their chairs to the fire and sat near him.

"Do you always live here?" Charles inquired, thinking that the room looked even more hideous by daylight than by candle light.

"Always," Eugénie answered, watching him as she spoke. "Always, except during the vintage. Then we go to help Nanon, and we all stay at the Abbey at Noyers."

"Do you never take a walk?"

"Sometimes, on Sundays after vespers, when it is fine, we

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walk down as far as the bridge," said Mme. Grandet, "or we sometimes go to see them cutting the hay."

"Have you a theatre here?"

"Go to the play!" cried Mme. Grandet; "go to see play-actors! Why, sir, do you not know that that is a mortal sin?"

"There, sir," said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, "we will give you chickens in the shell."

"Oh! new-laid eggs," said Charles, who, after the manner of those accustomed to luxury, had quite forgotten all about his partridge. "Delicious! Do you happen to have any butter, eh, my good girl?"

"Butter? If you have butter now, you will have no cake by-and-by," said the handmaid.

"Yes, of course, Nanon; bring some butter," cried Eugénie.

The young girl watched her cousin while he cut his bread and butter into strips, and felt happy. The most romantic shop-girl in Paris could not more thoroughly enjoy the spectacle of innocence triumphant in a melodrama. It must be conceded that Charles, who had been brought up by a graceful and charming mother, and had received his "finishing education" from an accomplished woman of the world, was as dainty, neat and elegant in his ways as any coxcomb of the gentler sex. The girl's quiet sympathy produced an almost magnetic effect. Charles, finding himself thus waited upon by his cousin and aunt, could not resist the influence of their overflowing kindness. He was radiant with good-humor, and the look he gave Eugénie was almost a smile. As he looked at her more closely he noticed her pure, regular features, her unconscious attitude, the wonderful clearness of her eyes, in which love sparkled, though she as yet knew nothing of love but its pain and a wistful longing.

"Really, my dear cousin," he said, "if you were in a box at the opera and in evening dress, and I would answer for it, my aunt's remark about deadly sin would be justified; all the men would be envious, and all the women jealous."

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Eugénie's heart beat fast with joy at this compliment, though it conveyed no meaning whatever to her mind.

"You are laughing at a poor little country cousin," she said.

"If you knew me better, cousin, you would know that I detest banter; it sears the heart and deadens the feelings." And he swallowed down a strip of bread and butter with perfect satisfaction.

"No," he continued, "I never make fun of others, very likely because I have not wit enough, a defect which puts me at a great disadvantage. They have a deadly trick in Paris of saying, 'He is *so* good-natured,' which, being interpreted, means—'the poor youth is as stupid as a rhinoceros.' But as I happen to be rich, and it is known that I can hit the bull's eye straight off at thirty paces with any kind of pistol anywhere, these witticisms are not leveled at me."

"It is evident from what you say, nephew," said Mme. Grandet gravely, "that you have a kind heart."

"That is a very pretty ring of yours," said Eugénie; "is there any harm in asking to see it?"

Charles took off the ring and held it out; Eugénie reddened as her cousin's rose-pink nails came in contact with her finger-tips.

"Mother, only see how fine the work is!"

"Oh, what a lot of gold there is in it!" said Nanon, who brought in the coffee.

"What is that?" asked Charles, laughing, as he pointed to an oval pipkin, made of glazed brown earthenware, ornamented without by a circular fringe of ashes. It was full of a brown boiling liquid, in which coffee grounds were visible as they rose to the surface and fell again.

"Coffee; boiling hot!" answered Nanon.

"Oh! my dear aunt, I must at least leave some beneficent trace of my stay here. You are a long way behind the times! I will show you how to make decent coffee in a *cafetière à la Chaptal.*" Forthwith he endeavored to explain the principles on which this utensil is constructed.

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"Bless me! if there is all that to-do about it," said Nanon, "you would have to give your whole time to it. I'll never make coffee that way, I know. Who is to cut the grass for our cow while I am looking after the coffee pot?"

"I would do it," said Eugénie.

"Child!" said Mme. Grandet, with a look at her daughter; and at the word came a swift recollection of the misery about to overwhelm the unconscious young man, and the three women were suddenly silent, and gazed pityingly at him. He could not understand it.

"What is it, cousin?" he asked Eugénie.

"Hush!" said Mme. Grandet, seeing that the girl was about to reply. "You know that your father means to speak to the gentleman——"

"Say, 'Charles,'" said young Grandet.

"Oh, is your name Charles?" said Eugénie. "It is a nice name."

Evil forebodings are seldom vain.

Just at that moment Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Nanon, who could not think of the cooper's return without shuddering, heard the familiar knock at the door.

"That is papa!" cried Eugénie.

She took away the saucer full of sugar, leaving one or two lumps on the tablecloth. Nanon hurried away with the egg-cups. Mme. Grandet started up like a frightened fawn. There was a sudden panic of terror, which amazed Charles, who was quite at a loss to account for it.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"My father is coming in," explained Eugénie.

"Well, and what then?"

M. Grandet entered the room, gave one sharp glance at the table, and another at Charles. He saw how it was at once.

"Aha! you are making a fête for your nephew. Good, very good, oh! very good, indeed!" he said, without stammering. "When the cat is away, the mice may play."

"Fête?" thought Charles, who had not the remotest conception of the state of affairs in the Grandet household.

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"Bring me my glass, Nanon," said the goodman.

Eugénie went for the glass. Grandet drew from his waistcoat pocket a large clasp-knife with a stag's horn handle, cut a slice of bread, buttered it slowly and sparingly, and began to eat as he stood. Just then Charles put some sugar into his coffee; this called Grandet's attention to the pieces of sugar on the table; he looked hard at his wife, who turned pale, and came a step or two towards him; he bent down and said in the poor woman's ear—

"Where did all that sugar come from?"

"Nanon went out to Fessard's for some; there was none in the house."

It is impossible to describe the painful interest that this dumb show possessed for the three women; Nanon had left her kitchen, and was looking into the dining-room to see how things went there. Charles meanwhile tasted his coffee, found it rather strong, and looked round for another piece of sugar, but Grandet had already pounced upon it and taken it away.

"What do you want, nephew?" the old man inquired.

"The sugar."

"Pour in some more milk if your coffee is too strong," answered the master of the house.

Eugénie took up the saucer, of which Grandet had previously taken possession, and set it on the table, looking quietly at her father the while. Truly, the fair Parisian who exerts all the strength of her weak arms to help her lover to escape by a ladder of silken cords, displays less courage than Eugénie showed when she put the sugar upon the table. The Parisian will have her reward. She will proudly exhibit the bruises on a round white arm, her lover will bathe them with tears and cover them with kisses, and pain will be extinguished in bliss; but Charles had not the remotest conception of what his cousin endured for him, or of the horrible dismay that filled her heart as she met her father's angry eyes; he would never even know of her sacrifice.

"You are eating nothing, wife?"

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The poor bond-slave went to the table, cut a piece of bread in fear and trembling, and took a pear. Eugénie, grown reckless, offered the grapes to her father, saying as she did so—

"Just try some of my fruit, papa! You will take some, will you not, cousin? I brought those pretty grapes down on purpose for you."

"Oh! if they could have their way, they would turn Saumur upside down for you, nephew! As soon as you have finished we will take a turn in the garden together; I have some things to tell you that would take a deal of sugar to sweeten them."

Eugénie and her mother both gave Charles a look, which the young man could not mistake.

"What do you mean by that, uncle? Since my mother died . . . (here his voice softened a little) there is no misfortune possible for me. . . ."

"Who can know what afflictions God may send to make trial of us, nephew," said his aunt.

"Tut, tut, tut," muttered Grandet, "here you are beginning with your folly already! I am sorry to see that you have such white hands, nephew."

He displayed the fists, like shoulders of mutton, with which nature had terminated his own arms.

"That is the sort of hand to rake the crowns together! You put the kind of leather on your feet that we used to make pocket-books of to keep bills in. That is the way you have been brought up. That's bad! That's bad!"

"What do you mean, uncle? I'll be hanged if I understand one word of this."

"Come along," said Grandet.

The miser shut his knife with a snap, drained his glass, and opened the door.

"Oh! keep up your courage, cousin!"

Something in the girl's voice sent a sudden chill through Charles; he followed his formidable relative with dreadful misgivings. Eugénie and her mother and Nanon went into the kitchen; an uncontrollable anxiety led them to watch the

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two actors in the scene which was about to take place in the damp little garden.

Uncle and nephew walked together in silence at first. Grandet felt the situation to be a somewhat awkward one; not that he shrank at all from telling Charles of his father's death, but he felt a kind of pity for a young man left in this way without a penny in the world, and he cast about for phrases that should break this cruel news as gently as might be. "You have lost your father!" he could say that; there was nothing in that; fathers usually predecease their children. But, "You have not a penny!" All the woes of the world were summed up in those words, so for the third time the worthy man walked the whole length of the path in the centre of the garden, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, and no word was said.

At all great crises in our lives, any sudden joy or great sorrow, there comes a vivid consciousness of our surroundings that stamps them on the memory forever; and Charles, with every faculty strained and intent, saw the box-edging to the borders, the falling autumn leaves, the mouldering walls, the gnarled and twisted boughs of the fruit-trees, and till his dying day every picturesque detail of the little garden came back with the memory of the supreme hour of that early sorrow.

"It is very fine, very warm," said Grandet, drawing in a deep breath of air.

"Yes, uncle, but why——"

"Well, my boy," his uncle resumed, "I have some bad news for you. Your father is very ill . . ."

"What am I doing here?" cried Charles. "Nanon!" he shouted, "order post horses! I shall be sure to find a carriage of some sort in the place, I suppose," he added, turning to his uncle, who had not stirred from where he stood.

"Horses and a carriage are of no use," Grandet answered, looking at Charles, who immediately stared straight before him in silence. "Yes, my poor boy, you guess what has happened; he is dead. But that is nothing; there is something worse; he has shot himself through the head——"

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"My father?"

"Yes, but that is nothing either. The newspapers are discussing it, as if it were any business of theirs. There, read for yourself."

Grandet had borrowed Cruchot's paper, and now he laid the fatal paragraph before Charles. The poor young fellow—he was only a lad as yet—made no attempt to hide his emotion, and burst into tears.

"Come, that is better," said Grandet to himself. "That look in his eyes frightened me. He is crying; he will pull through.—Never mind, my poor nephew," Grandet resumed aloud, not knowing whether Charles heard him or not, "that is nothing, you will get over it, but——"

"Never! never! My father! my father!"

"He has ruined you; you are penniless."

"What is that to me. Where is my father? . . . my father!" The sound of his sobbing filled the little garden, reverberated in ghastly echoes from the walls. Tears are as infectious as laughter; the three women wept with pity for him. Charles broke from his uncle without waiting to hear more, and sprang into the yard, found the staircase, and fled to his own room, where he flung himself across the bed and buried his face in the bedclothes, that he might give way to his grief in solitude as far as possible from these relations.

"Let him alone till the first shower is over," said Grandet, going back to the parlor. Eugénie and her mother had hastily returned to their places, had dried their eyes, and were sewing with cold, trembling fingers.

"But that fellow is good for nothing," went on Grandet; "he is so taken up with dead folk that he doesn't even think about the money."

Eugénie shuddered to hear the most sacred of sorrows spoken of in such a way; from that moment she began to criticise her father. Charles' sobs, smothered though they were, rang through that house of echoes; the sounds seemed to come from under the earth, a heart-rending wail that grew fainter towards the end of the day, and only ceased as night drew on.

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"Poor boy!" said Mme. Grandet.

It was an unfortunate remark! Goodman Grandet looked at his wife, then at Eugénie, then at the sugar basin; he recollected the sumptuous breakfast prepared that morning for their unhappy kinsman, and planted himself in the middle of the room.

"Oh! by the bye," he said, in his usual cool, deliberate way, "I hope you will not carry your extravagance any further, Mme. Grandet; I do not give you MY money for you to squander it on sugar for that young rogue."

"Mother had nothing whatever to do with it," said Eugénie. "It was I——"

"Because you are come of age," Grandet interrupted his daughter, "you think you can set yourself to thwart me, I suppose? Mind what you are about, Eugénie——"

"But, father, your own brother's son ought not to have to go without sugar in your house."

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" came from the cooper in a cadence of four semitones. "'Tis 'my nephew' here, and 'my brother's son' there; Charles is nothing to us, he has not a brass farthing. His father is a bankrupt, and when the young sprig has cried as much as he wishes, he shall clear out of this; I will not have my house turned topsy-turvy for him."

"What is a bankrupt, father?" asked Eugénie.

"A bankrupt," replied her father, "is guilty of the most dishonorable action that can dishonor a man."

"It must be a very great sin," said Mme. Grandet, "and our brother will perhaps be eternally lost."

"There you are with your preachments," her husband retorted, shrugging his shoulders. "A bankrupt, Eugénie," her father continued, "is a thief whom the law unfortunately takes under its protection. People trusted Guillaume Grandet with their goods, confiding in his character for fair-dealing and honesty; he has taken all they have, and left them nothing but the eyes in their heads to cry over their losses with. A bankrupt is worse than a highwayman; a highwayman sets upon you, and you have a chance to defend yourself;

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he risks his life besides, while the other—Charles is disgraced in fact."

The words filled the poor girl's heart; they weighed upon her with all their weight; she herself was so scrupulously conscientious; no flower in the depths of a forest had grown more delicately free from spot or stain; she knew none of the maxims of worldly wisdom, and nothing of its quibbles and its sophistries. So she accepted her father's cruel definition and sweeping statements as to bankrupts; he drew no distinction between a fraudulent bankruptcy and a failure from unavoidable causes, and how should she?

"But, father, could you not have prevented this misfortune?"

"My brother did not ask my advice; besides, his liabilities amount to four millions."

"How much is a million, father?" asked Eugénie, with the simplicity of a child who would fain have its wish fulfilled at once.

"A million?" queried Grandet. "Why, it is a million francs, two hundred thousand five-franc pieces; there are twenty sous in a franc, and it takes five francs of twenty sous each to make a five-franc piece."

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" cried Eugénie, "how came my uncle to have four millions of his own? Is there really anybody in France who has so many millions as that?"

Grandet stroked his daughter's chin and smiled. The wen seemed to grow larger.

"What will become of cousin Charles?"

"He will set out for the East Indies, and try to make a fortune. That is his father's wish."

"But has he any money to go with?"

"I shall pay his passage out as far as . . . yes . . . as far as Nantes."

Eugénie sprang up and flung her arms about her father's neck.

"Oh! father," she said, "you are good!"

Her warm embrace embarrassed Grandet somewhat; perhaps, too, his conscience was not quite at ease.

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"Does it take a long while to make a million?" she asked.

"Lord! yes," said the cooper; "you know what a Napoleon is; well, then, it takes fifty thousand of them to make a million."

"Mamma, we will have a *neuvaine* said for him."

"That was what I was thinking," her mother replied.

"Just like you! always thinking how to spend money. Really, one might suppose that we had any amount of money to throw away!"

As he spoke a sound of low, hoarse sobbing, more ominous than any which had preceded it, came from the garret. Eugénie and her mother shuddered.

"Nanon," called Grandet, "go up and see that he is not killing himself."

"Look here! you two," he continued, turning to his wife and daughter, whose cheeks grew white at his tones, "there is to be no nonsense, mind! I am leaving the house. I am going round to see the Dutchmen who are going to-day. Then I shall go to Cruchot's, and have a talk with him about all this."

He went out. As soon as the door closed upon Grandet, Eugénie and her mother breathed more freely. The girl had never felt constraint in her father's presence until that morning; but a few hours had wrought rapid changes in her ideas and feelings.

"Mamma, how many louis is a hogshead of wine worth?"

"Your father gets something between a hundred and a hundred and fifty francs for his; sometimes two hundred I believe, from what I have heard him say."

"And would there be fourteen hundred hogsheads in a vintage?"

"I don't know how many there are, child, upon my word; your father never talks about business to me."

"But, anyhow, papa must be rich."

"Maybe. But M. Cruchot told me that your father bought Froidfond two years ago. That would be a heavy pull on him."

Eugénie, now at a loss as to her father's wealth, went no further with her arithmetic.

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"He did not even so much as see me, the poor dear!" said Nanon on her return. "He is lying there on his bed like a calf, crying like a Magdalen, you never saw the like! Poor young man, what can be the matter with him?"

"Let us go up at once and comfort him, mamma; if we hear a knock, we will come downstairs."

There was something in the musical tones of her daughter's voice which Mme. Grandet could not resist. Eugénie was sublime; she was a girl no longer, she was a woman. With beating hearts they climbed the stairs and went together to Charles' room. The door was open. The young man saw nothing, and heard nothing; he was absorbed in his grief, an inarticulate cry broke from him now and again.

"How he loves his father!" said Eugénie in a low voice, and in her tone there was an unmistakable accent which betrayed the passion in her heart, and hopes of which herself was unaware. Mme. Grandet, with the quick instinct of a mother's love, glanced at her daughter and spoke in a low voice in her ear.

"Take care," she said, "or you may love him."

"Love him!" said Eugénie. "Ah! if you only knew what my father said."

Charles moved slightly as he lay, and saw his aunt and cousin.

"I have lost my father," he cried; "my poor father! If he had only trusted me and told me about his losses, we might have worked together to repair them. *Mon Dieu!* my kind father! I was so sure that I should see him again, and I said good-bye so carelessly, I am afraid, never thinking . . ."

His words were interrupted by sobs.

"We will surely pray for him," said Mme. Grandet. "Submit yourself to the will of God."

"Take courage, cousin," said Eugénie, gently; "nothing can give your father back to you; you must now think how to save your honor . . ."

A woman always has her wits about her, even in her ca-

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pacity of comforter, and with instinctive tact Eugénie sought to divert her cousin's mind from his sorrow by leading him to think about himself.

"My honor?" cried the young man, hastily pushing back the hair from his eyes. He sat upright upon the bed, and folded his arms. "Ah! true. My uncle said that my father had failed."

He hid his face in his hands with a heartrending cry of pain.

"Leave me! leave me! cousin Eugénie," he entreated. "Oh! God forgive my father, for he must have been terribly unhappy!"

There was something in the sight of this young sorrow, this utter abandonment of grief, that was horribly engaging. It was a sorrow that shrank from the gaze of others, and Charles' gesture of entreaty that they should leave him to himself was understood by Eugénie and her mother. They went silently downstairs again, took their places by the great window, and sewed on for nearly an hour without a word to each other.

Eugénie had looked round the room; it was a stolen glance. In one of those hasty surveys by which a girl sees everything in a moment, she had noticed the pretty trifles on the toilette-table—the scissors, the razors mounted with gold. The gleams of splendor and luxury, seen amidst all this misery, made Charles still more interesting in her eyes, perhaps by the very force of the contrast. Their life had been so lonely and so quiet; such an event as this, with its painful interest, had never broken the monotony of their lives; little had occurred to stir their imaginations, and now this tragical drama was being enacted under their eyes.

"Mamma," said Eugénie, "shall we wear mourning?"

"Your father will decide that," replied Mme Grandet, and once more they sewed in silence. Eugénie's needle moved with a mechanical regularity which betrayed her preoccupation of mind. The first wish of this adorable girl was to share her cousin's mourning. About four o'clock a sharp

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knock at the door sent a sudden thrill of terror through Mme. Grandet.

"What can have brought your father back?" she said to her daughter.

The vinegrower came in in high good humor. He rubbed his hands so energetically that nothing but a skin like leather could have borne it, and indeed his hands were tanned like Russia leather, though the fragrant pine-rosin and incense had been omitted in the process. For a time he walked up and down and looked at the weather, but at last his secret escaped him.

"I have hooked them, wife," he said, without stammering; "I have them safe. Our wine is sold! The Dutchmen and Belgians were setting out this morning; I hung about in the market-place in front of their inn, looking as simple as I could. What's-his-name—you know the man—came up to me. All the best growers are hanging off and holding their vintages; they wanted to wait, and so they can, I have not hindered them. Our Belgian was at his wits' end, I saw that. So the bargain was struck; he is taking the whole of our vintage at two hundred francs the hogshead, half of it paid down at once in gold, and I have promissory notes for the rest. There are six louis for you. In three months' time prices will go down."

The last words came out quietly enough, but there was something so sardonic in the tone that if the little knots of growers, then standing in the twilight in the market-place of Saumur, in dismay at the news of Grandet's sale, had heard him speak, they would have shuddered; there would have been a panic on the market—wines would have fallen fifty per cent.

"You have a thousand hogsheads this year, father, have you not?" asked Eugénie.

"Yes, little girl."

These words indicated that the cooper's joy had indeed reached high-water mark.

"That will mean two hundred thousand francs?"

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"Yes, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"Well, then, father, you can easily help Charles."

The surprise, the wrath and bewilderment with which Belshazzar beheld *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin* written upon his palace wall were as nothing compared with Grandet's cold fury; he had forgotten all about Charles, and now he found that all his daughter's inmost thoughts were of his nephew, and that this arithmetic of hers referred to him. It was exasperating.

"Look here!" he thundered; "ever since that scapegrace set foot in *my* house everything has gone askew. You take it upon yourselves to buy sugar-plums, and make a great set-out for him. I will not have these doings. I should think, at my age, I ought to know what is right and proper to do. At any rate, I have no need to take lessons from my daughter, nor from any one else. I shall do for my nephew whatever it is right and proper for me to do; it is no business of yours, you need not meddle in it.—And now, as for you, Eugénie," he added, turning towards her, "if you say another word about it, I will send you and Nanon off to the Abbey at Noyers, see if I don't. Where is that boy? has he come downstairs yet?"

"No, dear," answered Mme. Grandet.

"Why, what is he doing then?"

"He is crying for his father," Eugénie said.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and found nothing to say. There was some touch of the father even in him. He took one or two turns up and down, and then went straight to his strong-room to think over possible investments. He had thoughts of buying consols. Those two thousand acres of woodland had brought him in six hundred thousand francs; then there was the money from the sale of the poplars, there was last year's income from various sources, and this year's savings, to say nothing of the bargain which he had just concluded; so that, leaving those two hundred thousand francs out of the question, he possessed a lump sum of nine hundred thousand livres. That twenty per cent, to be made in so

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short a time upon his outlay, tempted him. Consols stood at seventy. He jotted down his calculations on the margin of the paper that had brought the news of his brother's death; the moans of his nephew sounded in his ears the while, but he did not hear them; he went on with his work till Nanon thumped vigorously on the thick wall to summon her master to dinner. On the last step of the staircase beneath the archway, Grandet paused and thought.

"There is the interest beside the eight per cent.—I will do it. Fifteen hundred thousand francs in two years' time, in gold from Paris too, full weight.—Well, what has become of my nephew?"

"He said he did not want anything," replied Nanon. "He ought to eat, or he will fall ill."

"It is so much saved," was her master's comment.

"Lord! yes," she replied.

"Pooh! he will not keep on crying forever. Hunger drives the wolf from the wood."

Dinner was a strangely silent meal. When the cloth had been removed, Mme. Grandet spoke to her husband.

"We ought to go into mourning, dear."

"Really, Mme. Grandet, you must be hard up for ways of getting rid of money. Mourning is in the heart; it is not put on with clothes."

"But for a brother, mourning is indispensable, and the Church bids us——"

"Then buy mourning out of your six louis; a band of crape will do for me; you can get me a band of crape."

Eugénie said nothing, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her generous instincts, so long repressed and dormant, had been suddenly awakened, and every kindly thought had been harshly checked as it had arisen. Outwardly this evening passed just as thousands of others had passed in their monotonous lives, but for the two women it was the most painful that they had ever spent. Eugénie sewed without raising her head; she took no notice of the workbox which Charles had looked at so scornfully yesterday evening. Mme. Gran-

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det knitted away at her cuffs. Grandet sat twirling his thumbs, absorbed in schemes which should one day bring about results that would startle Saumur. Four hours went by. Nobody dropped in to see them. As a matter of fact, the whole town was ringing with the news of Grandet's sharp practice, following on the news of his brother's failure and his nephew's arrival. So imperatively did Saumur feel the need to thrash these matters thoroughly out, that all the vine-growers, great or small, were assembled beneath the des Grassins' roof, and frightful were the imprecations which were launched at the head of their late Mayor.

Nanon was spinning; the whir of her wheel was the only sound in the great room beneath the gray-painted rafters.

"Our tongues don't go very fast," she said, showing her large teeth, white as blanched almonds.

"There is no call for them to go," answered Grandet, roused from his calculations.

He beheld a vision of the future—he saw eight millions in three years' time—he had set forth on a long voyage upon a golden sea.

"Let us go to bed. I will go up and wish my nephew a good night from you all, and see if he wants anything."

Mme. Grandet stayed on the landing outside her room door to hear what her worthy husband might say to Charles. Eugénie, bolder than her mother, went a step or two up the second flight.

"Well, nephew, you are feeling unhappy? Yes, cry, it is only natural, a father is a father. But we must bear our troubles patiently. Whilst you have been crying, I have been thinking for you; I am a kind uncle, you see. Come, don't lose heart. Will you take a little wine? Wine costs nothing at Saumur; it is common here; they offer it as they might offer you a cup of tea in the Indies.—But you are all in the dark," Grandet went on. "That's bad, that's bad; one ought to see what one is doing."

Grandet went to the chimney-piece.

"What!" he cried, "a wax candle! Where the devil have

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they fished that from? I believe the wenches would pull up the floor of my house to cook eggs for that boy."

Mother and daughter, hearing these words, fled to their rooms, and crept into their beds like frightened mice.

"Mme. Grandet, you have a lot of money somewhere, it seems," said the vinegrower, walking into his wife's rooms.

"I am saying my prayers, dear; wait a little," faltered the poor mother.

"The devil take your pious notions!" growled Grandet.

Misers have no belief in a life to come, the present is all in all to them. But if this thought gives an insight into the miser's springs of action, it possesses a wider application, it throws a pitiless light upon our own era—for money is the one all-powerful force, ours is pre-eminently the epoch when money is the lawgiver, socially and politically. Books and institutions, theories and practice, all alike combine to weaken the belief in a future life, the foundation on which the social edifice has been slowly reared for eighteen hundred years. The grave has almost lost its terrors for us. That Future which awaited us beyond the *Requiem* has been transported into the present, and one hope and one ambition possesses us all—to pass *per fas et nefas* into this earthly paradise of luxury, vanity, and pleasure, to deaden the soul and mortify the body for a brief possession of this promised land, just as in other days men were found willing to lay down their lives and to suffer martyrdom for the hope of eternal bliss. This thought can be read at large; it is stamped upon our age, which asks of the voter—the man who makes the laws—not "What do you think?" but "What can you pay?" —And what will become of us when this doctrine has been handed down from the bourgeoisie to the people?

"Mme. Grandet, have you finished?" asked the cooper.

"I am praying for you, dear."

"Very well, good night. To-morrow morning I shall have something to say to you."

Poor woman! she betook herself to sleep like a schoolboy who has not learned his lessons, and sees before him the

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angry face of the master when he wakes. Sheer terror led her to wrap the sheets about her head to shut out all sounds, but just at that moment she felt a kiss on her forehead; it was Eugénie who had slipped into the room in the darkness, and stood there barefooted in her nightdress.

"Oh! mother, my kind mother," she said, "I shall tell him to-morrow morning that it was all my doing."

"No, don't; if you do, he will send you away to Noyers. Let me manage it; he will not eat me, after all."

"Oh! mamma, do you hear?"

"What?"

"*He* is crying still."

"Go back to bed, dear. The floor is damp, it will strike cold to your feet."

So ended the solemn day, which had brought for the poor wealthy heiress a lifelong burden of sorrow; never again would Eugénie Grandet sleep as soundly or as lightly as heretofore. It not seldom happens that at some time in their lives this or that human being will act literally "unlike himself," and yet in very truth in accordance with his nature. Is it not rather that we form our hasty conclusions of him without the aid of such light as psychology affords, without attempting to trace the mysterious birth and growth of the causes which led to these unforeseen results? And this passion, which had its roots in the depths of Eugénie's nature, should perhaps be studied as if it were the delicate fibre of some living organism to discover the secret of its growth. It was a passion that would influence her whole life, so that one day it would be sneeringly called a malady. Plenty of people would prefer to consider a catastrophe improbable rather than undertake the task of tracing the sequence of the events that led to it, to discovering how the links of the chain were forged one by one in the mind of the actor. In this case Eugénie's past life will suffice to keen observers of human nature; her artless impulsiveness, her sudden outburst of tenderness will be no surprise to them. Womanly pity, that treacherous feeling, had filled her soul but the more

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completely because her life had been so uneventful that it had never been so called forth before.

So the trouble and excitement of the day disturbed her rest; she woke again and again to listen for any sound from her cousin's room, thinking that she still heard the moans that all day long had vibrated through her heart. Sometimes she seemed to see him lying up there, dying of grief; sometimes she dreamed that he was being starved to death. Towards morning she distinctly heard a terrible cry. She dressed herself at once, and in the dim light of the dawn fled noiselessly up the stairs to her cousin's room. The door stood open, the wax candle had burned itself down to the socket. Nature had asserted herself; Charles, still dressed, was sleeping in the armchair, with his head fallen forward on the bed; he had been dreaming as famished people dream. Eugénie admired the fair young face. It was flushed and tear-stained; the eyelids were swollen with weeping; he seemed to be still crying in his sleep, and Eugénie's own tears fell fast. Some dim feeling that his cousin was present awakened Charles; he opened his eyes, and saw her distress.

"Pardon me, cousin," he said dreamily. Evidently he had lost all reckoning of time, and did not know where he was.

"There are hearts here that feel for you, cousin, and *we* thought that you might perhaps want something. You should go to bed; you will tire yourself out if you sleep like that."

"Yes," he said, "that is true."

"Good-bye," she said, and fled, half in confusion, half glad that she had come. Innocence alone dares to be thus bold, and virtue armed with knowledge weighs its actions as carefully as vice.

Eugénie had not trembled in her cousin's presence, but when she reached her own room again she could scarcely stand. Her ignorant life had suddenly come to an end; she remonstrated with herself, and blamed herself again and again. "What will he think of me? He will believe that I love him." Yet she knew that this was exactly what she wished him to believe. Love spoke plainly within her, know-

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ing by instinct how love calls forth love. The moment when she stole into her cousin's room became a memorable event in the girl's lonely life. Are there not thoughts and deeds which, in love, are for some souls like a solemn betrothal?

An hour later she went to her mother's room, to help her to dress, as she always did. Then the two women went downstairs and took their places by the window, and waited for Grandet's coming in the anxiety which freezes or burns. Some natures cower, and others grow reckless, when a scene or painful agitation is in prospect; the feeling of dread is so widely felt that domestic animals will cry out when the slightest pain is inflicted on them as a punishment, while the same creature if hurt inadvertently will not utter a sound.

The cooper came downstairs, spoke in an absent-minded way to his wife, kissed Eugénie, and sat down to table. He seemed to have forgotten last night's threats.

"What has become of my nephew? The child is not much in the way."

"He is asleep, sir," said Nanon.

"So much the better, he won't want a wax candle for that," said Grandet facetiously.

His extraordinary mildness and satirical humor puzzled Mme. Grandet; she looked earnestly at her husband. The goodman—here perhaps it may be observed that in Touraine, Anjou, Poitou, and Brittany the designation *goodman* (*bonhomme*), which has been so often applied to Grandet, conveys no idea of merit; it is allowed to people of the worst temper as well as to good-natured idiots, and is applied without distinction to any man of a certain age—the goodman, therefore, took up his hat and gloves with the remark—

"I am going to have a look round in the market-place; I want to meet the Cruchots."

"Eugénie, your father certainly has something on his mind."

As a matter of fact, Grandet always slept but little, and was wont to spend half the night in revolving and maturing schemes, a process by which his views, observations, and

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plans gained amazingly in clearness and precision; indeed, this was the secret of that constant success which was the admiration of Saumur. Time and patience combined will effect most things, and the man who accomplishes much is the man with the strong will who can wait. The miser's life is a constant exercise of every human faculty in the service of a personality. He believes in self-love and interest, and in no other motives of action, but interest is in some sort another form of self-love, to wit, a practical form dealing with the tangible and the concrete, and both forms are comprised in one master-passion, for self-love and interest are but two manifestations of egoism. Hence perhaps the prodigious interest which a miser excites when cleverly put upon the stage. What man is utterly without ambition? And what social ambition can be obtained without money? Every one has something in common with this being; he is a personification of humanity, and yet is revolting to all the feelings of humanity.

Grandet really "had something on his mind," as his wife used to say. In Grandet, as in every miser, there was a keen relish for the game, a constant craving to play men off one against another for his own benefit, to mulct them of their crowns without breaking the law. And did not every victim who fell into his clutches renew his sense of power, his just contempt for the weak of the earth who let themselves fall such an easy prey? Ah! who has understood the meaning of the lamb that lies in peace at the feet of God, that most touching symbol of meek victims who are doomed to suffer here below, and of the future that awaits them hereafter, of weakness and suffering glorified at last? But here on earth it is quite otherwise; the lamb is the miser's legitimate prey, and by him (when it is fat enough) it is contemptuously penned, killed, cooked, and eaten. On money and on this feeling of contemptuous superiority the miser thrives.

During the night this excellent man's ideas had taken an entirely new turn; hence his unusual mildness. He had been weaving a web to entangle them in Paris; he would envelop

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them in its toils, they should be as clay in his hands; they should hope and tremble, come and go, toil and sweat, and all for his amusement, all for the old cooper in the dingy room at the head of the worm-eaten staircase in the old house at Saumur; it tickled his sense of humor.

He had been thinking about his nephew. He wanted to save his dead brother's name from dishonor in a way that should not cost a penny either to his nephew or to himself. He was about to invest his money for three years, his mind was quite at leisure from his own affairs; he really needed some outlet for his malicious energy, and here was an opportunity supplied by his brother's failure. The claws were idle, he had nothing to squeeze between them, so he would pound the Parisians for Charles' benefit, and exhibit himself in the light of an excellent brother at a very cheap rate. As a matter of fact, the honor of the family name counted for very little with him in this matter; he looked at it from the purely impersonal point of view of the gambler, who likes to see a game well played although it is no affair of his. The Cruchots were necessary to him, but he did not mean to go in search of them; they should come to him. That very evening the comedy should begin, the main outlines were decided upon already, to-morrow he would be held up as an object of admiration all over the town, and his generosity should not cost him a farthing!

Eugénie, in her father's absence, was free to busy herself openly for her cousin, to feel the pleasure of pouring out for him in many ways the wealth of pity that filled her heart; for in pity alone women are content that we should feel their superiority, and the sublimity of devotion is the one height which they can pardon us for leaving to them.

Three or four times Eugénie went to listen to her cousin's breathing, that she might know whether he was awake or still sleeping; and when she was sure that he was rising, she turned her attention to his breakfast, and cream, coffee, fruit, eggs, plates, and glasses were all in turn the objects of her especial care. She softly climbed the rickety stairs to listen

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again. Was he dressing? Was he still sobbing? She went to the door at last and spoke—

"Cousin!"

"Yes, cousin."

"Would you rather have breakfast downstairs or up here in your room?"

"Whichever you please."

"How do you feel?"

"I am ashamed to say that I am hungry."

This talk through the closed door was like an episode in a romance for Eugénie.

"Very well then, we will bring your breakfast up to your room, so that my father may not be vexed about it."

She sprang downstairs, and ran into the kitchen with the swiftness of a bird.

"Nanon, just go and set his room straight."

The familiar staircase which she had gone up and down so often, and which echoed with every sound, seemed no longer old in Eugénie's eyes; it was radiant with light, it seemed to speak in a language which she understood, it was young again as she herself was, young like the love in her heart. And the mother, the kind, indulgent mother, was ready to lend herself to her daughter's whims, and as soon as Charles' room was ready they both went thither to sit with him. Does not Christian charity bid us comfort the mourner? Little religious sophistries were not wanting by which the women justified themselves.

Charles Grandet received the most tender and affectionate care. Such delicate tact and sweet kindness touched him very closely in his desolation; and for these two souls, they found a moment's freedom from the restraint under which they lived; they were at home in an atmosphere of sorrow; they could give him the quick sympathy of fellowship in misfortune. Eugénie could avail herself of the privilege of relationship to set his linen in order, and to arrange the trifles that lay on the dressing-table; she could admire the wonderful knick-knacks at her leisure; all the paraphernalia of

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luxury, the delicately-wrought gold and silver passed through her hands, her fingers dwelt lingeringly on them under the pretext of looking closely at the workmanship.

Charles was deeply touched by the generous interest which his aunt and cousin took in him. He knew Parisian life quite sufficiently to know that under these circumstances his old acquaintances and friends would have grown cold and distant at once. But his trouble had brought out all the peculiar beauty of Eugénie's character, and he began to admire the simplicity of manner which had provoked his amusement but yesterday. So when Eugénie waited on her cousin with such frank goodwill, taking from Nanon the earthenware bowl full of coffee and cream to set it before him herself, the Parisian's eyes filled with tears; and when he met her kind glance he took her hand in his and kissed it.

"Well, what is the matter now?" she asked.

"Oh! they are tears of gratitude," he answered.

Eugénie turned hastily away, took the candles from the chimney-piece and held them out to Nanon.

"Here," she said, "take these away."

When she could look at her cousin again, the flush was still on her face, but her eyes at least did not betray her, and gave no sign of the excess of joy that flooded her heart; yet the same thought was dawning in both their souls, and could be read in the eyes of either, and they knew that the future was theirs. This thrill of happiness was all the sweeter to Charles in his great sorrow, because it was so little expected.

There was a knock at the door, and both the women hurried down to their places by the window. It was lucky for them that their flight downstairs was sufficiently precipitate, and that they were at their work when Grandet came in, for if he had met them beneath the archway, all his suspicions would be aroused at once. After the mid-day meal, which he took standing, the keeper, who had not yet received his promised reward, appeared from Froidfond, bringing with him a hare, some partridges shot in the park, a few eels, and a couple of pike sent by him from the miller's.

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"Aha! so here is old Cornoiller; you come just when you are wanted, like salt fish in Lent. Is all that fit to eat?"

"Yes, sir; all killed the day before yesterday."

"Come, Nanon, look alive! Just take this, it will do for dinner to-day; the two Cruchots are coming."

Nanon opened her eyes with amazement, and stared first at one and then at another.

"Oh! indeed," she said; "and where are the herbs and the bacon to come from?"

"Wife," said Grandet, "let Nanon have six francs, and remind me to go down into the cellar to look out a bottle of good wine."

"Well, then, M. Grandet," the gamekeeper began (he wished to see the question of his salary properly settled, and was duly primed with a speech), "M. Grandet——"

"Tut, tut, tut," said Grandet, "I know what you are going to say; you are a good fellow, we will see about that to-morrow, I am very busy to-day. Give him five francs, wife," he added, looking at Mme. Grandet, and with that he beat a retreat. The poor woman was only too happy to purchase peace at the price of eleven francs. She knew by experience that Grandet usually kept quiet for a fortnight after he had made her disburse coin by coin the money which he had given her.

"There, Cornoiller," she said, as she slipped ten francs into his hand; "we will repay you for your services one of these days."

Cornoiller had no answer ready, so he went.

"Madame," said Nanon, who had by this time put on her black bonnet and had a basket on her arm, "three francs will be quite enough; keep the rest. I shall manage just as well with three."

"Let us have a good dinner, Nanon; my cousin is coming downstairs," said Eugénie.

"There is something very extraordinary going on, I am sure," said Mme. Grandet. "This makes the third time since we were married that your father has asked any one here to dinner."

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It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon; Eugénie and her mother had laid the cloth and set the table for six persons, and the master of the house had brought up two or three bottles of the exquisite wines, which are jealously hoarded in the cellars of the vinegrowing district.

Charles came into the dining-room looking white and sad; there was a pathetic charm about his gestures, his face, his looks, the tones of his voice; his sorrow had given him the interesting look that women like so well, and Eugénie only loved him the more because his features were worn with pain. Perhaps, too, this trouble had brought them nearer in other ways. Charles was no longer the rich and handsome young man who lived in a sphere far beyond her ken; he was a kinsman in deep and terrible distress, and sorrow is a great leveler. Woman has this in common with the angels—all suffering creatures are under her protection.

Charles and Eugénie understood each other without a word being spoken on either side. The poor dandy of yesterday, fallen from his high estate, to-day was an orphan, who sat in a corner of the room, quiet, composed, and proud; but from time to time he met his cousin's eyes, her kind and affectionate glance rested on him, and compelled him to shake off his dark and sombre forebodings, and to look forward with her to a future full of hope, in which she loved to think that she might share.

The news of Grandet's dinner-party caused even greater excitement in Saumur than the sale of his vintage, although this latter proceeding had been a crime of the blackest dye, an act of high treason against the vinegrowing interest. If Grandet's banquet to the Cruchots has been prompted by the same idea which on a memorable occasion cost Alcibiades' dog its tail, history might perhaps have heard of the miser; but he felt himself to be above public opinion in this town which he exploited; he held Saumur too cheap.

It was not long before the des Grassins heard of Guillaume Grandet's violent end and impending bankruptcy. They determined to pay a visit to their client that evening, to con-

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dole with him in his affliction, and to show a friendly interest; while they endeavored to discover the motives which could have led Grandet to invite the Cruchots to dinner at such a time.

Precisely at five o'clock President C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary arrived, dressed up to the nines this time. The guests seated themselves at table, and began by attacking their dinner with remarkably good appetites. Grandet was solemn, Charles was silent, Eugénie was dumb, and Mme. Grandet said no more than usual; if it had been a funeral repast, it could not well have been less lively. When they rose from the table, Charles addressed his aunt and uncle—

"Will you permit me to withdraw? I have some long and difficult letters to write."

"By all means, nephew."

When Charles had left the room, and his amiable relative could fairly assume that he was out of earshot and deep in his correspondence, Grandet gave his wife a sinister glance.

"Mme. Grandet, what we are going to say will be Greek to you; it is half-past seven o'clock, you ought to be off to bed by this time. Good night, my daughter." He kissed Eugénie, and mother and daughter left the room.

Then the drama began. Now, if ever in his life, Grandet displayed all the shrewdness which he had acquired in the course of his long experience of men and business, and all the cunning which had gained him the nickname of "old fox" among those who had felt his teeth a little too sharply. Had the ambition of the late Mayor of Saumur soared a little higher; if he had had the luck to rise to a higher social sphere, and destiny had sent him to mingle in some congress in which the fate of nations is at stake, the genius which he was now devoting to his own narrow ends would doubtless have done France glorious service. And yet, after all, the probability is that once away from Saumur the worthy cooper would have cut but a poor figure, and that minds, like certain plants and animals, are sterile when removed to a distant climate and an alien soil.

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"M-m-monsieur le P-p-président, you were s-s-saying that b-b-bankruptcy——"

Here the trick of stammering which it had pleased the vinegrower to assume so long ago that every one believed it to be natural to him (like the deafness of which he was wont to complain in rainy weather), grew so unbearably tedious for the Cruchot pair, that as they strove to catch the syllables, they made unconscious grimaces, moving their lips as if they would fain finish the words in which the cooper entangled both himself and them at his pleasure.

And here, perhaps, is the fitting place to record the history of Grandet's deafness and the impediment in his speech. No one in Anjou had better hearing or could speak Angevin French more clearly and distinctly than the wily vinegrower —when he chose. Once upon a time, in spite of all his shrewdness, a Jew had got the better of him. In the course of their discussion the Israelite had applied his hand to his ear, in the manner of an ear-trumpet, the better to catch what was said, and had gibbered to such purpose in his search for a word, that Grandet, a victim to his own humanity, felt constrained to suggest to that crafty Hebrew the words and ideas of which the Israelite appeared to be in search, to finish himself the reasonings of the said Hebrew, to say for that accursed alien all that he ought to have said for himself, till Grandet ended by fairly changing places with the Jew.

From this curious contest of wits the vinegrower did not emerge triumphant; indeed, for the first and last time in his business career he made a bad bargain. But loser though he was from a money point of view, he had received a great practical lesson, and later on he reaped the fruits of it. Wherefore in the end he blessed the Jew who had shown him how to wear out the patience of an opponent, and to keep him so closely employed in expressing his adversary's ideas that he completely lost sight of his own. The present business required more deafness, more stammering, more of the mazy circumlocutions in which Grandet was wont to in-

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volve himself, than any previous transaction in his life; for, in the first place, he wished to throw the responsibility of his ideas on some one else; some one else was to suggest his own schemes to him, while he was to keep himself to himself, and leave every one in the dark as to his real intentions.

"Mon-sieur de B-B-Bonfons." (This was the second time in three years that he had called the younger Cruchot "M. de Bonfons," and the president might well consider that this was almost tantamount to being acknowledged as the crafty cooper's son-in-law.)

"You were s-s-s-saying that in certain cases, p-p-p-proceedings in b-b-bankruptcy might be s-s-s-stopped b-b-by——"

"At the instance of a Tribunal of Commerce. That is done every day of the year," said M. C. de Bonfons, guessing, as he thought, at old Grandet's idea, and running away with it. "Listen!" he said, and in the most amiable way he prepared to explain himself.

"I am l-listening," replied the older man meekly, and his face assumed a demure expression; he looked like some small boy who is laughing in his sleeve at his schoolmaster while appearing to pay the most respectful attention to every word.

"When anybody who is in a large way of business and is much looked up to, like your late brother in Paris, for instance——"

"My b-b-brother, yes."

"When any one in that position is likely to find himself insolvent——"

"Ins-s-solvent, do they call it?"

"Yes. When his failure is imminent, the Tribunal of Commerce, to which he is amenable (do you follow me?) has power by a judgment to appoint liquidators to wind up the business. Liquidation is not bankruptcy, do you understand? It is a disgraceful thing to be a bankrupt, but a *liquidation* reflects no discredit on a man."

"It is quite a d-d-d-different thing, if only it d-d-does not cost any more," said Grandet.

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"Yes. But a liquidation can be privately arranged without having recourse to the Tribunal of Commerce," said the president as he took a pinch of snuff. "How is a man declared bankrupt?"

"Yes, how?" inquired Grandet. "I have n-n-never thought about it."

"In the first place, he may himself file a petition and leave his schedule with the clerk of the court, the debtor himself draws it up or authorizes some one else to do so, and it is duly registered. Or, in the second place, his creditors may make him a bankrupt. But supposing the debtor does not file a petition, and none of his creditors make application to the court for a judgment declaring him bankrupt; now let us see what happens then!"

"Yes, let us s-s-see."

"In that case, the family of the deceased, or his representatives, or his residuary legatee, or the man himself (if he is not dead), or his friends for him (if he has absconded), liquidate his affairs. Now, possibly, *you* may intend to do this in your brother's case?" inquired the president.

"Oh! Grandet," exclaimed the notary, "that would be acting very handsomely. We in the provinces have our notions of honor. If you saved your name from dishonor, for it is your name, you would be——"

"Sublime!" cried the president, interrupting his uncle.

"Of course, my b-b-brother's n-n-name was Grandet, th-that is certain sure, I d-d-don't deny it, and anyhow this l-l-l-l-liquidation would be a very g-good thing for my n-n-nephew in every way, and I am very f-f-fond of him. But we shall see. I know n-n-nothing of those sharpers in P-Paris, and their t-tricks. And here am I at S-Saumur, you see! There are my vine-cuttings, m-my d-d-draining; in sh-sh-short, there are my own af-f-affairs, to s-s-see after. *I* have n-n-never accepted a bill. What is a bill? I have t-t-taken many a one, b-b-but I have n-n-never put my n-n-name to a piece of p-paper. You t-t-take 'em, and you can d-d-d-discount 'em, and that is all I know. I have heard s-s-say that you can b-b-b-buy them——"

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"Yes," assented the president. "You can buy bills on the market, less so much per cent. Do you understand?"

Grandet held his hand to his ear, and the president repeated his remark.

"But it s-s-seems there are t-t-two s-sides to all this?" replied the vinegrower. "At my age, I know n-n-n-nothing about this s-s-s-sort of thing. I must st-top here to l-look after the g-g-grapes, the vines d-d-don't stand still, and the g-g-grapes have to p-pay for everything. The vintage m-must be l-l-looked after before anything else. Then I have a g-great d-d-deal on my hands at Froidfond that I can't p-p-possibly l-l-l-leave to any one else. I don't under-st-t-tand a word of all this; it is a p-p-pretty kettle of fish, confound it; I can't l-l-leave home to s-see after it. You s-s-s-say that to bring about a l-l-liquidation I ought to be in Paris. Now you can't be in t-t-two p-places at once unless you are a b-b-bird."

"*I* see what you mean," cried the notary. "Well, my old friend, you have friends, friends of long standing ready to do a great deal for you."

"Come, now!" said the vinegrower to himself, "so you are making up your minds, are you?"

"And if some one were to go to Paris, and find up your brother Guillaume's largest creditor, and say to him——"

"Here, just l-l-listen to me a moment," the cooper struck in. "Say to him ——what? S-s-something like this: 'M. Grandet of Saumur th-this, M. Grandet of Saumur th-th-that. He l-l-loves his brother, he has a r-r-regard for his n-nephew; Grandet thinks a l-l-lot of his f-family, he means to d-do well by them. He has just s-s-sold his vintage uncommonly well. Don't drive the thing into b-b-b-bankruptcy, call a meeting of the creditors, and ap-p-point l-l-liquidators. Then s-see what Grandet will do. You will do a great d-deal b-b-better for yourselves by coming to an arrangement than by l-l-letting the l-l-l-lawyers poke their noses into it.' That is how it is, eh?"

"Quite so!" said the president.

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"Because, look you here, Monsieur de Bon-Bon-Bonfons, you must l-l-look before you l-l-l-leap. And you can't d-do more than you can. A big af-f-fair like this wants l-l-l-looking into, or you may ru-ru-ruin yourself. That is so, isn't it? eh?"

"Certainly," said the president. "I myself am of the opinion that in a few months' time you could buy up the debts for a fixed sum and pay by instalments. Aha! you can trail a dog a long way with a bit of bacon. When a man has not been declared bankrupt, as soon as the bills are in your hands, you will be as white as snow."

"As s-s-s-snow?" said Grandet, holding his hand to his ear. "S-s-s-snow? I don't underst-t-tand."

"Why, then, just listen to me!" cried the president.

"I am l-l-listening——"

"A bill of exchange is a commodity subject to fluctuations in value. This is a deduction from Jeremy Bentham's theory of interest. He was a publicist who showed conclusively that the prejudices entertained against money-lenders were irrational."

"Bless me!" put in Grandet.

"And seeing that, according to Bentham, money itself is a commodity, and that that which money represents is no less a commodity," the president went on; "and since it is obvious that the commodity called a bill of exchange is subject to the same laws of supply and demand that control production of all kinds, a bill of exchange bearing this or that signature, like this or that article of commerce, is scarce or plentiful in the market, commands a high premium or is worth nothing at all. Wherefore the decision of this Court—— There! how stupid I am, I beg your pardon; I mean I am of the opinion that you could easily buy up your brother's debts for twenty-five per cent. of their value."

"You m-m-m-mentioned Je-je-je-jeremy Ben——"

"Bentham, an Englishman."

"That is a Jeremiah who will save us many lamentations in business matters," said the notary, laughing.

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"The English s-s-sometimes have s-s-s-sensible notions," said Grandet. "Then, according to B-Bentham, how if my b-b-brother's b-bills are worth n-n-n-nothing? If I am right, it looks to me as if . . . the creditors would . . . n-no, they wouldn't . . . I underst-t-tand."

"Let me explain all this to you," said the president. "In law, if you hold all the outstanding bills of the firm of Grandet, your brother, his heirs and assigns, would owe no one a penny. So far, so good."

"Good," echoed Grandet.

"And in equity; suppose that your brother's bills were negotiated upon the market (negotiated, do you understand the meaning of that term?) at a loss of so much per cent; and suppose one of your friends happened to be passing, and bought up the bills; there would have been no physical force brought to bear upon the creditors, they gave them up of their own free-will, and the estate of the late Grandet of Paris would be clear in the eye of the law."

"True," stuttered the cooper, "b-b-business is business. So that is s-s-s-settled. But, for all that, you underst-tand that it is a d-d-difficult matter. I have not the m-m-money, nor have I the t-t-t-time, nor——"

"Yes, yes; you cannot be at the trouble. Well, now, I will go to Paris for you if you like (you must stand the expenses of the journey, that is a mere trifle). I will see the creditors, and talk to them, and put them off; it can all be arranged; you will be prepared to add something to the amount realized by the liquidation so as to get the bills into your hands."

"We shall s-see about that; I cannot and *will* not undert-t-take anything unless I know . . . You can't d-d-do more than you can, you know."

"Quite so, quite so."

"And I am quite bewildered with all these head-splitting ideas that you have sp-prung upon me. Th-this is the f-f-first t-time in my l-l-life that I have had to th-th-think about such th——"

"Yes, yes, you are not a consulting barrister."

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"I am a p-p-poor vinegrower, and I know n-n-nothing about what you have just t-t-t-told me; I m-m-must th-think it all out."

"Well! then," began the president, as if he meant to reopen the discussion.

"Nephew!" interrupted the notary reproachfully.

"Well, uncle?" answered the president.

"Let M. Grandet explain what he means to do. It is a very important question, and you are to receive his instructions. Our dear friend might now very pertinently state——"

A knock at the door announced the arrival of the des Grassins; their coming and exchange of greetings prevented Cruchot senior from finishing his sentence. Nor was he ill-pleased with this diversion; Grandet was looking askance at him already, and there was that about the wen on the cooper's face which indicated that a storm was brewing within. And on sober reflection it seemed to the cautious notary that a president of a court of first instance was not exactly the person to dispatch to Paris, there to open negotiations with creditors, and to lend himself to a more than dubious transaction which, however you looked at it, hardly squared with notions of strict honesty; and not only so, but he had particularly noticed that Goodman Grandet had shown not the slightest inclination to disburse anything whatever, and he trembled instinctively at the thought of his nephew becoming involved in such a business. He took advantage of the entrance of the des Grassins, took his nephew by the arm, and drew him into the embrasure of the window.

"You have gone quite as far as there is any need," he said, "that is quite enough of such zeal; you are overreaching yourself in your eagerness to marry the girl. The devil! You should not rush into a thing open-mouthed, like a crow at a walnut. Leave the steering of the ship to me for a bit, and just shift your sails according to the wind. Now, is it a part you ought to play, compromising your dignity as magistrate in such a——"

He broke off suddenly, for he heard M. des Grassins saying to the old cooper, as he held out his hand—

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"Grandet, we have heard of the dreadful misfortunes which have befallen your family—the ruin of the firm of Guillaume Grandet and your brother's death; we have come to express our sympathy with you in this sad calamity."

"There is only one misfortune," the notary interrupted at this point—"the death of the younger M. Grandet; and if he had thought to ask his brother for assistance, he would not have taken his own life. Our old friend here, who is a man of honor to his finger tips, is prepared to discharge the debts contracted by the firm of Grandet in Paris. In order to spare our friend the worry of what is, after all, a piece of lawyer's business, my nephew the president offers to start immediately for Paris, so as to arrange with the creditors, and duly satisfy their claims."

The three des Grassins were thoroughly taken aback by these words; Grandet appeared to acquiesce in what had been said, for he was pensively stroking his chin. On their way to the house the family had commented very freely upon Grandet's niggardliness, and indeed had almost gone so far as to accuse him of fratricide.

"Ah! just what I expected!" cried the banker, looking at his wife. "What was I saying to you only just now as we came along, Mme. des Grassins? Grandet, I said, is a man who will never swerve a hair's-breadth from the strict course of honor; he will not endure the thought of the slightest spot on his name! Money without honor is a disease. Oh! we have a keen sense of honor in the provinces! This is noble—really noble of you, Grandet. I am an old soldier, and I do not mince matters, I say what I think straight out; and *mille tonnerres!* this is sublime!"

"Then the s-s-sub-sublime costs a great d-d-deal," stuttered the cooper, as the banker shook him warmly by the hand.

"But this, my good Grandet (no offence to you, M. le Président), is simply a matter of business," des Grassins went on, "and requires an experienced man of business to deal with it. There will have to be accounts kept of sales and outgoing expenses; you ought to have tables of interest at

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your finger ends. I must go to Paris on business of my own, and I could undertake——"

"Then we must s-s-see about it, and t-t-t-try to arrange between us to p-p-provide for anything that m-may t-t-turn up, but I d-d-don't want to be d-d-drawn into anything that I would rather not d-d-d-do," continued Grandet, "because, you see, M. le Président naturally wants me to pay his expenses." The good man did not stammer over these last words.

"Eh?" said Mme. des Grassins. "Why, it is a pleasure to stay in Paris! For my part, I should be glad to go there at my own expense."

She made a sign to her husband, urging him to seize this opportunity of discomfiting their enemies and cheat them of their mission. Then she flung a withering glance at the now crestfallen and miserable Cruchots. Grandet seized the banker by the buttonhole and drew him aside.

"I should feel far more confidence in you than in the president," he remarked; "and besides that," he added (and the wen twitched a little), "there are other fish to fry. I want to make an investment. I have several thousand francs to put into consols, and I don't mean to pay more than eighty for them. Now, from all I can hear, that machine always runs down at the end of the month. You know all about these things, I expect?"

"*Pardieu!* I should think I did. Well, then, I shall have to buy several thousand livres worth of consols for you?"

"Just by way of a beginning. But mum, I want to play at this game without letting any one know about it. You will buy them for me at the end of the month, and say nothing to the Cruchots; it would only annoy them. Since you are going to Paris, we might as well see at the same time what trumps are for my poor nephew's sake."

"That is an understood thing. I shall travel post to Paris to-morrow," said des Grassins aloud, "and I will come round to take your final instructions at—when shall we say?"

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"At five o'clock, before dinner," said the vinegrower, rubbing his hands.

The two factions for a little while remained facing each other. Des Grassins broke the silence again, clapping Grandet on the shoulder, and saying—

"It is a fine thing to have a good uncle like——"

"Yes, yes," returned Grandet, falling into the stammer again, "without m-making any p-p-parade about it; I am a good uncle; I l-l-loved my brother; I will give p-p-p-proof of it, if-if-if it d-doesn't cost——"

Luckily the banker interrupted him at this point.

"We must go, Grandet. If I am to set out sooner than I intended, I shall have to see after some business at once before I go."

"Right, quite right. I myself, in connection with you know what, must p-p-put on my cons-s-sidering cap, as P-President Cruchot s-s-says."

"Plague take it! I am no longer M. de Bonfons," thought the magistrate moodily, and his face fell; he looked like a judge who is bored by the cause before him.

The heads of the rival clans went out together. Both had completely forgotten Grandet's treacherous crime of that morning; his disloyal behavior had faded from their minds. They sounded each other, but to no purpose, as to the goodman's real intentions (if intentions he had) in this new turn that matters had taken.

"Are you coming with us to Mme. Dorsonval's?" des Grassins asked the notary.

"We are going there later on," replied the president. "With my uncle's permission, we will go first to see Mlle. de Gribeaucourt; I promised just to look in on her to say goodnight."

"We shall meet again, then," smiled Mme. des Grassins.

But when the des Grassins were at some distance from the two Cruchots, Adolphe said to his father, "They are in a pretty stew, eh?"

"Hush!" returned his mother, "they can very likely hear

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what we are saying, and besides, that remark of yours was not in good taste; it sounds like one of your law school phrases."

"Well, uncle!" cried the magistrate, when he saw the des Grassins were out of earshot, "I began by being President de Bonfons, and ended as plain Cruchot."

"I saw myself that you were rather put out about it; and the des Grassins took the wind out of our sails. How stupid you are, for all your sharpness! Let *them* set sail, on the strength of a 'We shall see' from Grandet; be easy, my boy, Eugénie shall marry you for all that."

A few moments later, and the news of Grandet's magnanimity was set circulating in three houses at once; the whole town talked of nothing but Grandet's devotion to his brother. The sale of his vintage in utter disregard of the agreement made among the vinegrowers was forgotten; every one fell to praising his scrupulous integrity, and to lauding his generosity, a quality which no one had suspected him of possessing. There is that in the French character which is readily excited to fury or to passionate enthusiasm by any meteor that appears above their horizon, that is captivated by the bravery of a blatant fact. Can it be that collectively men have no memories?

As soon as Grandet had bolted the house door he called to Nanon.

"Don't go to bed," he said, "and don't unchain the dog; there is something to be done, and we must do it together. Cornoiller will be round with the carriage from Froidfond at eleven o'clock. You must sit up for him, and let him in quietly; don't let him rap at the door, and tell him not to make a noise. You get into trouble with the police if you raise a racket at night. And besides, there is no need to let all the quarter know that I am going out."

Having thus delivered himself, Grandet went up to his laboratory, and Nanon heard him stirring about, rummaging, going and coming, all with great caution. Clearly he had no wish to waken his wife or daughter, and above all things he

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desired in nowise to excite any suspicion in the mind of his nephew; he had seen that a light was burning in the young man's room, and had cursed his relative forthwith.

In the middle of the night Eugénie heard a sound like the groan of a dying man; her cousin was always in her thoughts, and for her the dying man was Charles. How white and despairing he had looked when he wished her good-night; perhaps he had killed himself. She hastily wrapped herself in her capuchine, a sort of long cloak with a hood to it, and determined to go to see for herself. Some rays of bright light streaming through the cracks of her door frightened her not a little at first, perhaps the house was on fire; but she was soon reassured. She could hear Nanon's heavy footsteps outside, and the sounds of the old servant's voice mingled with the neighing of several horses.

"Can my father be taking Charles away?" she asked herself, as she set her door ajar cautiously, for fear the hinges should creak, so that she could watch all that was going on in the corridor.

All at once her eyes met those of her father, and, absent and indifferent as they looked, a cold shudder ran through her. The cooper and Nanon were coming along carrying something which hung by a chain from a stout cudgel, one end of which rested on the right shoulder of either; the something was a little barrel such as Grandet sometimes amused himself by making in the bakehouse, when he had nothing better to do.

"Holy Virgin! how heavy it is, sir!" said Nanon in a whisper.

"What a pity it is only full of pence!" replied the cooper. "Look out! or you will knock down the candlestick."

The scene was lighted by a single candle set between two balusters.

"Cornoiller," said Grandet to his gamekeeper *in partibus*, "have you your pistols with you?"

"No, sir. Lord, love you! What can there be to fear for a keg of coppers?"

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"Oh! nothing, nothing," said Goodman Grandet.

"Besides, we shall get over the ground quickly," the keeper went on; "your tenants have picked out their best horses for you."

"Well, well. You did not let them know where I was going?"

"I did not know that myself."

"Right. Is the carriage strongly built?"

"That's all right, mister. Why, what is the weight of a few paltry barrels like those of yours? It would carry two or three thousand of the like of them."

"Well," said Nanon, "I know there's pretty well eighteen hundred weight *there,* that there is!"

"Will you hold your tongue, Nanon! You tell my wife that I have gone into the country, and that I shall be back to dinner.—Hurry up, Cornoiller; we must be in Angers before nine o'clock."

The carriage started. Nanon bolted the gateway, let the dog loose, and lay down and slept in spite of her bruised shoulder; and no one in the quarter had any suspicion of Grandet's journey or of its object. The worthy man was a miracle of circumspection. Nobody ever saw a penny lying about in that house full of gold. He had learned that morning from the gossip on the quay that some vessels were being fitted out at Nantes, and that in consequence gold was so scarce there that it was worth double its ordinary value, and speculators were buying it in Angers. The old cooper, by the simple device of borrowing his tenants' horses, was prepared to sell his gold at Angers, receiving in return an order upon the Treasury from the Receiver-General for the sum destined for the purchase of his consols, and an addition in the shape of the premium paid on his gold.

"My father is going out," said Eugénie to herself. She had heard all that had passed from the head of the staircase.

Silence reigned once more in the house. The rattle of the wheels in the streets of sleeping Saumur grew more and more distant, and at last died away. Then it was that a sound

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seemed to reach Eugénie's heart before it fell on her ears, a wailing sound that rang through the thin walls above—it came from her cousin's room. There was a thin line of light, scarcely wider than a knife edge, beneath his door; the rays slanted through the darkness and left a bright gleaming bar along the balusters of the crazy staircase.

"He is unhappy," she said, as she went up a little further.

A second moan brought her to the landing above. The door stood ajar; she thrust it open. Charles was sleeping in the rickety old armchair, his head drooped over to one side, his hand hung down and nearly touched the floor, the pen that he had let fall lay beneath his fingers. Lying in this position, his breath came in quick, sharp jerks that startled Eugénie. She entered hastily.

"He must be very tired," she said to herself, as she saw a dozen sealed letters lying on the table. She read the addresses—*MM. Farry, Breilman and Co., carriage builders; M. Buisson, tailor;* and so forth.

"Of course, he has been settling his affairs, so that he may leave France as soon as possible," she thought.

Her eyes fell upon two unsealed letters. One of them began—"My dear Annette . . ." she felt dazed, and could see nothing more for a moment. Her heart beat fast, her feet seemed glued to the floor.

"His dear Annette! He loves, he is beloved! . . . Then there is no more hope! . . . What does he say to her?" These thoughts flashed through her heart and brain. She read the words everywhere: on the walls, on the very floor, in letters of fire.

"Must I give him up already? No, I will not read the letter. I ought not to stay . . . And yet, even if I did read it?"

She looked at Charles, gently took his head in her hands, and propped it against the back of the chair. He submitted like a child, who even while he is sleeping knows that it is his mother who is bending over him, and, without waking, feels his mother's kisses. Like a mother, Eugénie raised

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the drooping hand, and, like a mother, laid a soft kiss on his hair. *"Dear Annette!"* A mocking voice shrieked the words in her ear.

"I know that perhaps I may be doing wrong, but I will read that letter," she said.

Eugénie turned her eyes away; her high sense of honor reproached her. For the first time in her life there was a struggle between good and evil in her soul. Hitherto she had never done anything for which she needed to blush. Love and curiosity silenced her scruples. Her heart swelled higher with every phrase as she read; her quickened pulses seemed to send a sharp, tingling glow through her veins, and to heighten the vivid emotions of her first love.

"MY DEAR ANNETTE,—Nothing should have power to separate us save this overwhelming calamity that has befallen me, a calamity that no human foresight could have predicted. My father has died by his own hand; his fortune and mine are both irretrievably lost. I am left an orphan at an age when, with the kind of education I have received, I am almost a child; and, nevertheless, I must now endeavor to show myself a man, and to rise from the dark depths into which I have been hurled. I have been spending part of my time to-night in revolving plans for my future. If I am to leave France as an honest man, as of course I mean to do, I have not a hundred francs that I can call my own with which to tempt fate in the Indies or in America. Yes, my poor Anna, I am going in quest of fortune to the most deadly foreign climes. Beneath such skies, they say, fortunes are rapidly and surely made. As for living on in Paris, I could not bring myself to do it. I could not face the coldness, the contempt, and the affronts that a ruined man, the son of a bankrupt, is sure to receive. Great heaven! to owe two millions! . . . I should fall in a duel before a week had passed. So I shall not return to Paris. Your love—the tenderest, the most devoted love that ever ennobled the heart of man—would not seek to draw me back. Alas! my darling, I have

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not money enough to take me to you, that I might give and receive one last kiss, a kiss that should put strength into me for the task that lies before me . . ."

"Poor Charles, I did well to read this. I have money, and he shall have it," said Eugénie. She went on with the letter when she could see for her tears.

"I have not even begun to think of the hardships of poverty. Supposing that I find I have the hundred louis to pay for my passage out, I have not a sou to lay out on a trading venture. Yet, no; I shall not have a hundred louis, nor yet a hundred sous; I have no idea whether anything will be left when I have settled all my debts in Paris. If there is nothing, I shall simply go to Nantes and work my passage out. I will begin at the bottom of the ladder, like many another man of energy who has gone out to the Indies as a penniless youth, to return thence a rich man. This morning I began to look my future steadily in the face. It is far harder for me than for others; I have been the petted child of a mother who idolized me, indulged by the best and kindest of fathers; and at my very entrance into the world I met with the love of an Anna! As yet I have only known the primrose paths of life; such happiness could not last. Yet, dear Annette, I have more fortitude than could be looked for from a thoughtless youth; above all, from a young man thus lapped round in happiness from the cradle, spoiled and flattered by the most delightful woman in Paris, the darling of Fortune, whose wishes were as law to a father who . . . Oh! my father! He is dead, Annette! . . . Well, I have thought seriously over my position, and I have likewise thought over yours. I have grown much older in the last twenty-four hours. Dear Anna, even if, to keep me beside you, you were to give up all the luxuries that you enjoy, your box at the opera, and your toilette, we should not have nearly sufficient for the necessary expenses of the extravagant life that I am accustomed to; and besides, I could not think of

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allowing you to make such sacrifices for me. To-day, therefore, we part forever."

"Then this is to take leave of her! *Sainte Vierge!* what happiness!"

Eugénie started and trembled for joy. Charles stirred in his chair, and Eugénie felt a chill of dread. Luckily, however, he did not wake. She went on reading.

"When shall I come back? I cannot tell. Europeans grow old before their time in those tropical countries, especially Europeans who work hard. Let us look forward and try to see ourselves in ten years' time. In ten years from now your little girl will be eighteen years old; she will be your constant companion; that is, she will be a spy upon you. If the world will judge you very harshly, your daughter will probably judge more harshly still; such ingratitude on a young girl's part is common enough, and we know how the world regards these things. Let us take warning and be wise. Only keep the memory of those four years of happiness in the depths of your soul, as I shall keep them buried in mine; and be faithful, if you can, to your poor friend. I shall not be too exacting, dear Annette; for, as you can see, I must submit to my altered lot; I am compelled to look at life in a business-like way, and to base my calculations on dull, prosaic fact. So I ought to think of marriage as a necessary step in my new existence; and I will confess to you that here, in my uncle's house in Saumur, there is a cousin whose manners, face, character, and heart you would approve; and who, moreover, has, it appears——"

"How tired he must have been to break off like this when he was writing to *her!*" said Eugénie to herself, as the letter ended abruptly in the middle of a sentence. She was ready with excuses for him.

How was it possible that an inexperienced girl should discover the coldness and selfishness of this letter? For young

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girls, religiously brought up as she had been, are innocent and unsuspecting, and can see nothing but love when they have set foot in love's enchanted kingdom. It is as if a light from heaven shone in their own souls, shedding its beams upon their path; their lover shines transfigured before them in reflected glory, radiant with fair colors from love's magic fires, and endowed with noble thoughts which perhaps in truth are none of his. Women's errors spring, for the most part, from a belief in goodness, and a confidence in truth. In Eugénie's heart the words, "My dear Annette—my beloved," echoed like the fairest language of love; they stirred her soul like organ music—like the divine notes of the *Venite adoremus* falling upon her ears in childhood.

Surely the tears, not dry even yet upon her cousin's eyelids, betokened the innate nobility of nature that never fails to attract a young girl. How could she know that Charles' love and grief for his father, albeit genuine, was due rather to the fact that his father had loved him than to a deeply-rooted affection on his own part for his father? M. and Mme. Guillaume Grandet had indulged their son's every whim; every pleasure that wealth could bestow had been his; and thus it followed that he had never been tempted to make the hideous calculations that are only too common among the younger members of a family in Paris, when they see around them all the delights of Parisian life, and reflect with disgust that, so long as their parents are alive, all these enjoyments are not for them. The strange result of the father's lavish kindness had been a strong affection on the part of his son, an affection unalloyed by any after thought. But, for all that, Charles was a thorough child of Paris, with the Parisian's habit of mind; Annette herself had impressed upon him the importance of thinking out all the consequences of every step; he was not youthful, despite the mask of youth.

He had received the detestable education of a world in which more crimes (in thought and word at least) are committed in one evening than come before a court of justice in the course of a whole session; a world in which great

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ideas perish, done to death by a witticism, and where it is reckoned a weakness not to see things as they are. To see things as they are—that means, believe in nothing, put faith in nothing and in no man, for there is no such thing as sincerity in opinion or affection; mistrust events, for even events at times have been known to be manufactured. To see things as they are you must weigh your friend's purse morning by morning; you must know by instinct the right moment to interfere for your own profit in every matter that turns up; you must keep your judgment rigorously suspended, be in no hurry to admire a work of art or a noble deed, and give every one credit for interested motives on every possible occasion.

After many follies, the great lady, the fair Annette, compelled Charles to think seriously; she talked to him of his future, passing a fragrant hand through his hair, and imparted counsel to him on the art of getting on in the world, while she twisted a stray curl about her fingers. She had made him effeminate, and now she set herself to make a materialist of him, a twofold work of demoralization, a corruption none the less deadly because it never offended against the canons of good society, good manners, and good taste.

"You are a simpleton, Charles," she would say; "I see that it will be no easy task to teach you the ways of the world. You were very naughty about M. des Lupeaulx. Oh! he is not over-fastidious, I grant you, but you should wait until he falls from power, and then you may despise him as much as you like. Do you know what Mme. Campan used to say to us? 'My children, so long as a man is a Minister, adore him; if he falls, help to drag him to the shambles. He is a kind of deity so long as he is in power, but after he is fallen and ruined he is viler than Marat himself, for he is still alive, while Marat is dead and out of sight. Life is nothing but a series of combinations, which must be studied and followed very carefully if a good position is to be successfully maintained.'"

Charles had no very exalted aims; he was too much of a

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worldling; he had been too much spoiled by his father and mother, too much flattered by the society in which he moved, to be stirred by any lofty enthusiasm. In the clay of his nature there was a grain of gold, due to his mother's teaching; but it had been passed through the Parisian draw-plate, and beaten out into a thin surface gilding which must soon be worn away by contact with the world.

At this time Charles, however, was only one-and-twenty, and it is taken for granted that freshness of heart accompanies the freshness of youth; it seems so unlikely that the mind within should be at variance with the young face, and the young voice, and the candid glance. Even the hardest judge, the most sceptical attorney, the flintiest-hearted money-lender will hesitate to believe that a wizened heart and a warped and corrupted nature can dwell beneath a young exterior, when the forehead is smooth and tears come so readily to the eyes. Hitherto Charles had never had occasion to put his Parisian maxims in practice; his character had not been tried, and consequently had not been found wanting; but, all unknown to him, egoism had taken deep root in his nature. The seeds of this baneful political economy had been sown in his heart; it was only a question of time, they would spring up and flower as soon as the soil was stirred, as soon as he ceased to be an idle spectator and became an actor in the drama of real life.

A young girl is nearly always ready to believe unquestioningly in the promise of a fair exterior; but even if Eugénie had been as keenly observant and as cautious as girls in the provinces sometimes are, how could she have brought herself to mistrust her cousin, when all he did and said, and everything about him, seemed to be the spontaneous outcome of a noble nature? This was the last outburst of real feeling, the last reproachful sigh of conscience in Charles' life; fate had thrown them together at that moment, and, unfortunately for her, all her sympathies had been aroused for him.

So she laid down the letter that seemed to her so full of love, and gave herself up to the pleasure of watching her

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sleeping cousin; the dreams and hopes of youth seemed to hover over his face; and then and there she vowed to herself that she would love him always. She glanced over the other letter; there could be no harm in reading it, she thought; she should only receive fresh proofs of the noble qualities with which, womanlike, she had invested the man whom she had idealized.

"MY DEAR ALPHONSE," so it began, "by the time this letter is in your hands I shall have no friends left; but I will confess that though I put no faith in the worldly-minded people who use the word so freely, I have no doubts of your friendship for me. So I am commissioning you to settle some matters of business. I look to you to do the best you can for me in this, for all I have in the world is involved in it. By this time you must know how I am situated. I have nothing, and have made up my mind to go out to the Indies. I have just written to all the people to whom any money is owing, and the enclosed list is as accurate as I can make it from memory. I think the sale of my books, furniture, carriages, horses, and so forth ought to bring in sufficient to pay my debts. I only mean to keep back a few trinkets of little value, which will go some way towards a trading venture. I will send you a power of attorney in due form for this sale, my dear Alphonse, in case any difficulty should arise. You might send my guns and everything of that sort to me here. And you must take 'Briton;' no one would ever give me anything like as much as the splendid animal is worth; I would rather give him to you, you must regard him as the mourning ring which a dying man leaves in his will to his executor. Farry, Breilman and Co. have been building a very comfortable traveling carriage for me, but they have not sent it home yet; get them to keep it if you can, and if they decline to have it left on their hands, make the best arrangement you can for me, and do all you can to save my honor in the position in which I am placed. I lost six louis at play to that fellow from the British Isles, mind that he is . . ."

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"Dear cousin," murmured Eugénie, letting the sheet fall, and, seizing one of the lighted candles, she hastened on tiptoe to her own room.

Once there, it was not without a keen feeling of pleasure that she opened one of the drawers in an old oak chest—a most beautiful specimen of the skill of the craftsmen of the Renaissance, you could still make out the half-effaced royal salamander upon it. From this drawer she took a large red velvet money-bag, with gold tassels, and the remains of a golden fringe about it, a bit of faded splendor that had belonged to her grandmother. In the pride of her heart she felt its weight, and joyously set to work to reckon up the value of her little hoard, sorting out the different coins. *Imprimis,* twenty Portuguese moidores as new and fresh as when they were struck in 1725, in the reign of John V.; each was nominally worth five lisbonines, or a hundred and sixty-five francs, but actually they were worth a hundred and eighty francs (so her father used to tell her), a fancy value on account of the rarity and beauty of the aforesaid coins, which shone like the sun. *Item,* five genovines, rare Genoese coins of a hundred livres each, their current value was perhaps about eighty francs, but collectors would give a hundred for them. These had come to her from old M. de la Bertellière. *Item,* three Spanish quadruples of the time of Philip V., bearing the date 1729. Mme. Gentillet had given them to her, one by one, always with the same little speech: "There's a little yellow bird, there's a buttercup for you, worth ninety-eight livres! Take great care of it, darling; it will be the flower of your flock." *Item* (and those were the coins that her father thought most of, for the gold was a fraction over the twenty-three carats), a hundred Dutch ducats, struck at the Hague in 1756, and each worth about thirteen francs. *Item,* a great curiosity! . . . a few coins dear to a miser's heart, three rupees bearing the sign of the Balance, and five with the sign of the Virgin stamped upon them, all pure gold of twenty-four carats—the magnificent coins of the Great Mogul. The weight of metal in them

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alone was worth thirty-seven francs forty centimes, but amateurs who love to finger gold would give fifty francs for such coins as those. *Item,* the double napoleon that had been given to her the day before, and which she had carelessly slipped into the red velvet bag.

There were new gold pieces fresh from the mint among her treasures, real works of art, which old Grandet liked to look at from time to time, so that he might count them over and tell his daughter of their intrinsic value, expatiating also upon the beauty of the bordering, the sparkling field, the ornate lettering with its sharp, clean, flawless outlines. But now she gave not a thought to their beauty and rarity; her father's mania, and the risks she ran by despoiling herself of a hoard so precious in his eyes, were all forgotten. She thought of nothing but her cousin, and managed at last to discover, after many mistakes in calculation, that she was the owner of eighteen hundred francs all told, or of nearly two thousand francs if the coins were sold for their actual value as curiosities.

She clapped her hands in exultation at the sight of her riches, like a child who is compelled to find some outlet for his overflowing glee and dances for joy. Father and daughter had both counted their wealth that night; he in order to sell his gold; she that she might cast it abroad on the waters of love. She put the money back into the old purse, took it up, and went upstairs with it without a moment's hesitation. Her cousin's distress was the one thought in her mind; she did not even remember that it was night, conventionalities were utterly forgotten; her conscience did not reproach her, she was strong in her happiness and her love.

As she stood upon the threshold with the candle in one hand and the velvet bag in the other, Charles awoke, saw his cousin, and was struck dumb with astonishment. Eugénie came forward, set the light on the table, and said with an unsteady voice—

"Cousin Charles, I have to ask your forgiveness for something I have done; it was very wrong, but if you will overlook it, God will forgive me."

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"What can it be?" asked Charles, rubbing his eyes.

"I have been reading those two letters."

Charles reddened.

"Do you ask how I came to do it?" she went on, "and why I came up here? Indeed, I do not know now; and I am almost tempted to feel glad that I read the letters, for through reading them I have come to know your heart, your soul, and . . ."

"And what?" asked Charles.

"And your plans—the difficulty that you are in for want of money——"

"My *dear* cousin——"

"Hush! hush! do not speak so loud, do not let us wake anybody. Here are the savings of a poor girl who has no wants," she went on, opening the purse. "You must take them, Charles. This morning I did not know what money was; you have taught me that it is simply a means to an end, that is all. A cousin is almost a brother; surely you may borrow from your sister."

Eugénie, almost as much a woman as a girl, had not foreseen a refusal, but her cousin was silent.

"Why, are you going to refuse me?" asked Eugénie. The silence was so deep that the beating of her heart was audible. Her pride was wounded by her cousin's hesitation, but the thought of his dire need came vividly before her, and she fell on her knees.

"I will not rise," she said, "until you have taken that money. Oh! cousin, say something, for pity's sake! . . . so that I may know that you respect me, that you are generous, that . . ."

This cry, wrung from her by a noble despair, brought tears to Charles' eyes; he would not let her kneel, she felt his hot tears on her hands, and sprang to her purse, which she emptied out upon the table.

"Well, then, it is 'Yes,' is it not?" she said, crying for joy. "Do not scruple to take it, cousin; you will be quite rich. That gold will bring you luck, you know. Some day you

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shall pay it back to me, or, if you like, we will be partners; I will submit to any conditions that you may impose. But you ought not to make so much of this gift."

Charles found words at last.

"Yes, Eugénie, I should have a little soul indeed if I would not take it. But nothing for nothing, confidence for confidence."

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled.

"Listen, dear cousin, I have there——"

He interrupted himself for a moment to show her a square box in a leather case, which stood on the chest of drawers.

"There is something there that is dearer to me than life. That box was a present from my mother. Since this morning I have thought that if she could rise from her tomb she herself would sell the gold that in her tenderness she lavished on this dressing-case, but I cannot do it—it would seem like sacrilege."

Eugénie grasped her cousin's hand tightly in hers at these last words.

"No," he went on after a brief pause, during which they looked at each other with tearful eyes, "I do not want to pull it to pieces, nor to risk taking it with me on my wanderings. I will leave it in your keeping, dear Eugénie. Never did one friend confide a more sacred trust to another; but you shall judge for yourself."

He drew the box from its leather case, opened it, and displayed before his cousin's astonished eyes a dressing-case resplendent with gold—the curious skill of the craftsman had only added to the value of the metal.

"All that you are admiring is nothing," he said, pressing the spring of a secret drawer. "There is something which is worth more than all the world to me," he added sadly.

He took out two portraits, two of Mme. de Mirbel's masterpieces, handsomely set in pearls.

"How lovely she is! Is not this the lady to whom you were writing?"

"No," he said, with a little smile; "that is my mother, and

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this is my father—your aunt and uncle. Eugénie, I could beg and pray of you on my knees to keep this treasure safe for me. If I should die, and lose your little fortune, the gold will make good your loss; and to you alone can I leave those two portraits, for you alone are worthy to take charge of them but do not let them pass into other hands, rather destroy them . . ."

Eugénie was silent.

"Well, 'it is *Yes*, is it not?'" he said, and there was a winning charm in his manner.

As the last words were spoken, she gave him for the first time such a glance as a loving woman can, a bright glance that reveals a depth of feeling within her. He took her hand and kissed it.

"Angel of purity! what is money henceforward between us two? It is nothing, is it not? but the feeling, which alone gave it worth, will be everything."

"You are like your mother. Was her voice as musical as yours, I wonder?"

"Oh! far more sweet . . ."

"Yes, for you," she said, lowering her eyelids. "Come, Charles, you must go to bed; I wish it. You are very tired. Good-night."

Her cousin had caught her hand in both of his; she drew it gently away, and went down to her room, her cousin lighting the way. In the doorway of her room they both paused.

"Oh! why am I a ruined man?" he said.

"Pshaw! my father is rich, I believe," she returned.

"My poor child," said Charles, as he set one foot in her room, and propped himself against the wall by the doorway, "if your father had been rich, he would not have let my father die, and you would not be lodged in such a poor place as this; he would live altogether in quite a different style."

"But he has Froidfond."

"And what may Froidfond be worth?"

"I do not know; but there is Noyers too."

"Some miserable farmhouse!"

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"He has vineyards and meadows——"

"They are not worth talking about," said Charles scornfully. "If your father had even twenty-four thousand livres a year, do you suppose that you would sleep in a bare, cold room like this?" he added, as he made a step forward with his left foot. "That is where my treasures will be," he went on, nodding towards the old chest, a device by which he tried to conceal his thoughts from her.

"Go," she said, "and try to sleep," and she barred his entrance into an untidy room. Charles drew back; and the cousins bade each other a smiling good-night.

They fell asleep, to dream the same dream; and from that time forward Charles found that there were still roses to be gathered in the world in spite of his mourning. The next morning Mme. Grandet saw her daughter walking with Charles before breakfast. He was still sad and subdued; how, indeed, should he be otherwise than sad? He had been brought very low in his distress; he was gradually finding out how deep the abyss was into which he had fallen, and the thought of the future weighed heavily upon him.

"My father will not be back before dinner," said Eugénie, in reply to an anxious look in her mother's eyes.

The tones of Eugénie's voice had grown strangely sweet; it was easy to see from her face and manner that the cousins had some thought in common. Their souls had rushed together, while perhaps as yet they scarcely knew the power or the nature of this force which was binding them each to each.

Charles sat in the dining-room; no one intruded upon his sorrow. Indeed, the three women had plenty to do. Grandet had gone without any warning, and his work-people were at a standstill. The slater came, the plumber, the bricklayer, and the carpenter followed; so did laborers, tenants, and vinedressers, some came to pay their dues, and others to receive them, and yet others to make bargains for the repairs which were being done. Mme. Grandet and Eugénie, therefore, were continually coming and going; they had to listen to interminable histories from laborers and country people.

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Everything that came into the house Nanon promptly and securely stowed away in her kitchen. She always waited for her master's instructions as to what should be kept, and what should be sold in the market. The worthy cooper, like many little country squires, was wont to drink his worst wine, and to reserve his spoiled or wind-fallen orchard fruit for home consumption.

Towards five o'clock that evening Grandet came back from Angers. He had made fourteen thousand francs on his gold, and carried a Government certificate bearing interest until the day when it should be transferred into *rentes*. He had left Cornoiller also in Angers to look after the horses, which had been nearly foundered by the night journey, and had given instructions to bring them back leisurely after they had had a thorough rest.

"I have been to Angers, wife," he said; "and I am hungry."

"Have you had nothing to eat since yesterday?" called Nanon from her kitchen.

"Nothing whatever," said the worthy man.

Nanon brought in the soup. Des Grassins came to take his client's instructions just as the family were sitting down to dinner. Grandet had not so much as seen his nephew all this time.

"Go on with your dinner, Grandet," said the banker. "We can have a little chat. Have you heard what gold is fetching in Angers, and that people from Nantes are buying it there? I am going to send some over."

"You need not trouble yourself," answered his worthy client; "they have quite enough there by this time. I don't like you to lose your labor when I can prevent it; we are too good friends for that."

"But gold is at thirteen francs fifty centimes premium."

"Say *was* at a premium."

"How the deuce did you get to know that?"

"I went over to Angers myself last night," Grandet told him in a low voice.

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The banker started, and a whispered conversation followed; both des Grassins and Grandet looked at Charles from time to time, and once more a gesture of surprise escaped the banker, doubtless at the point where the old cooper commissioned him to purchase *rentes* to bring in a hundred thousand livres.

"M. Grandet," said des Grassins, addressing Charles, "I am going to Paris, and if there is anything I can do for you ——"

"Thank you, sir, there is nothing," Charles replied.

"You must thank him more heartily than that, nephew. This gentleman is going to wind up your father's business and settle with his creditors."

"Then is there any hope of coming to an arrangement?" asked Charles.

"Why, are you not my nephew?" cried the cooper, with a fine assumption of pride. "Our honor is involved; is not your name Grandet?"

Charles rose from his chair, impulsively flung his arms about his uncle, turned pale, and left the room. Eugénie looked at her father with affection and pride in her eyes.

"Well, let us say good-bye, my good friend," said Grandet. "I am very much at your service. Try to get round those fellows over yonder."

The two diplomatists shook hands, and the cooper went to the door with his neighbor; he came back to the room again when he had closed the door on des Grassins, flung himself down in his easy chair, and said to Nanon: "Bring me some cordial."

But he was too much excited to keep still; he rose and looked at old M. de la Bertellière's portrait, and began to "dance a jig," in Nanon's phrase, singing to himself—

Once in the *Gardes françaises*
I had a grandpapa . . .

Nanon, Mme. Grandet, and Eugénie all looked at each other in silent dismay. The vinegrower's ecstasies never boded any good.

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The evening was soon over. Old Grandet went off early to bed, and no one was allowed to stay up after that; when he slept, every one else must likewise sleep, much as in Poland, in the days of Augustus the Strong, whenever the king drank all his subjects were loyally tipsy. Wherefore, Nanon, Charles, and Eugénie were no less tired than the master of the house; and as for Mme. Grandet, she slept or woke, ate or drank, as her husband bade her. Yet during the two hours allotted to the digestion of his dinner the cooper was more facetious than he had ever been in his life before, and uttered not a few of his favorite aphorisms; one example will serve to plumb the depths of the cooper's mind. When he had finished his cordial, he looked pensively at the glass, and thus delivered himself—

"You have no sooner set your lips to a glass than it is empty! Such is life. You cannot have your cake and eat it too, and you can't turn over your money and keep it in your purse; if you could only do that, life would be too glorious."

He was not only jocose, he was good-natured, so that when Nanon came in with her spinning-wheel—"You must be tired," he said; "let the hemp alone."

"And if I did," the servant answered, *"Quien,* I should have to sit with my hands before me."

"Poor Nanon! would you like some cordial?"

"Cordial? Oh! I don't say no. Madame makes it much better than the apothecaries do. The stuff they sell is like physic."

"They spoil the flavor with putting too much sugar in it," said the goodman.

The next morning, at the eight o'clock breakfast, the party seemed, for the first time, almost like one family. Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Charles had been drawn together by these troubles, and Nanon herself unconsciously felt with them. As for the old vinegrower, he scarcely noticed his nephew's presence in the house, his greed of gold had been

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satisfied, and he was very shortly to be quit of this young sprig by the cheap and easy expedient of paying his nephew's traveling expenses as far as Nantes.

Charles and Eugénie meanwhile were free to do what seemed to them good. They were under Mme. Grandet's eyes, and Grandet reposed complete faith in his wife in all matters of conduct and religion. Moreover, he had other things to think of; his meadows were to be drained, and a row of poplars was to be planted along the Loire, and there was all the ordinary winter work at Froidfond and elsewhere; in fact, he was exceedingly busy.

And now began the springtime of love for Eugénie. Since that hour in the night when she had given her gold to her cousin, her heart had followed the gift. They shared a secret between them; they were conscious of this understanding whenever they looked at each other; and this knowledge, that brought them more and more closely together, drew them in a manner out of the current of everyday life. And did not relationship justify a certain tenderness in the voice and kindness in the eyes? Eugénie therefore set herself to make her cousin forget his grief in the childish joys of growing love.

For the beginnings of love and the beginnings of life are not unlike. Is not the child soothed by smiles and cradle-songs, and fairy tales of a golden future that lies before him? Above him, too, the bright wings of hope are always spread, and does he not shed tears of joy or of sorrow, wax petulant over trifles and quarrelsome over the pebbles with which he builds a tottering palace, or the flowers that are no sooner gathered than forgotten? Is he not also eager to outstrip Time, and to live in the future? Love is the soul's second transformation.

Love and childhood were almost the same thing for Charles and Eugénie; the dawn of love and its childish beginnings were all the sweeter because their hearts were full of gloom; and this love, that from its birth had been enveloped in crape, was in keeping with their homely surroundings

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in the melancholy old house. As the cousins interchanged a few words by the well in the silent courtyard, or sat out in the little garden towards sunset time, wholly absorbed by the momentous nothings that each said to each, or wrapped in the stillness that always brooded over the space between the ramparts and the house, Charles learned to think of love as something sacred. Hitherto, with his great lady, his "dear Annette," he had experienced little but its perils and storms; but that episode in Paris was over, with its coquetry and passion, its vanity and emptiness, and he turned to this love in its purity and truth.

He came to feel a certain fondness for the old house, and their way of life no longer seemed absurd to him. He would come downstairs early in the morning so as to snatch a few words with Eugénie before her father gave out the stores; and when the sound of Grandet's heavy footstep echoed on the staircase, he fled into the garden. Even Eugénie's mother did not know of this morning tryst of theirs, and Nanon made as though she did not see it; it was a small piece of audacity that gave the keen relish of a stolen pleasure to their innocent love. Then when breakfast was over, and Goodman Grandet had gone to see after his business and his improvements, Charles sat in the gray parlor between the mother and daughter, finding a pleasure unknown before in holding skeins of thread for them to wind, in listening to their talk, and watching them sew. There was something that appealed to him strongly in the almost monastic simplicity of the life, which had led him to discover the nobleness of the natures of these two unworldly women. He had not believed that such lives as these were possible in France; in Germany he admitted that old-world manners lingered still, but in France they were only to be found in fiction and in Auguste Lafontaine's novels. It was not long before Eugénie became an embodiment of his ideal, Goethe's Marguerite without her error.

Day after day, in short, the poor girl hung on his words and looks, and drifted further along the stream of love. She

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snatched at every happiness as some swimmer might catch at an overhanging willow branch, that so he might reach the bank and rest there for a little while.

Was not the time of parting very near now? The shadow of that parting seemed to fall across the brightest hours of those days that fled so fast; and not one of them went by but something happened to remind her how soon it would be upon them.

For instance, three days after des Grassins had started for Paris, Grandet had taken Charles before a magistrate with the funereal solemnity with which such acts are performed by provincials, and in the presence of that functionary the young man had had to sign a declaration that he renounced all claim to his father's property. Dreadful repudiation! An impiety amounting to apostasy! He went to M. Cruchot to procure two powers of attorney, one for des Grassins, the other for the friend who was commissioned to sell his own personal effects. There were also some necessary formalities in connection with his passport; and finally, on the arrival of the plain suit of mourning which Charles had ordered from Paris, he sent for a clothier in Saumur, and disposed of his now useless wardrobe. This transaction was peculiarly pleasing to old Grandet.

"Ah! *Now* you look like a man who is ready to set out, and means to make his way in the world," he said, as he saw his nephew in a plain, black overcoat of rough cloth. "Good, very good!"

"I beg you to believe, sir," Charles replied, "that I shall face my position with proper spirit."

"What does this mean?" asked his worthy relative; there was an eager look in the goodman's eyes at the sight of a handful of gold which Charles held out to him.

"I have gathered together my studs and rings and everything of any value that I have; I am not likely to want them now; but I know of nobody in Saumur, and this morning I thought I would ask you——"

"To buy it?" Grandet broke in upon him.

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"No, uncle, to give me the name of some honest man who ——"

"Give it to me, nephew; I will take it upstairs and find out what it is worth, and let you know the value to a centime. Jeweler's gold," he commented, after an examination of a long chain, "jeweler's gold, eighteen to nineteen carats, I should say."

The worthy soul held out his huge hand for it, and carried off the whole collection.

"Cousin Eugénie," said Charles, "permit me to offer you these two clasps; you might use them to fasten ribbons around your wrists, that sort of bracelet is all the rage just now."

"I do not hesitate to take it, cousin," she said, with a look of intelligence.

"And, aunt, this is my mother's thimble; I have treasured it up till now in my dressing-case," and he gave a pretty gold thimble to Mme. Grandet, who for the past ten years had longed for one.

"It is impossible to thank you in words, dear nephew," said the old mother, as her eyes filled with tears. "But morning and evening I shall repeat the prayer for travelers, and pray most fervently for you. If anything should happen to me, Eugénie shall take care of it for you."

"It is worth nine hundred and eighty-nine francs seventy-five centimes, nephew," said Grandet, as he came in at the door. "But to save you the trouble of selling it, I will let you have the money in livres."

This expression "in livres" means, in the districts along the Loire, that a crown of six livres is to be considered worth six francs, without deduction.

"I did not venture to suggest such a thing," Charles answered, "but I shrank from hawking my trinkets about in the town where you are living. Dirty linen ought not to be washed in public, as Napoleon used to say. Thank you for obliging me."

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Grandet scratched his ear, and there was a moment's silence in the room.

"And, dear uncle," Charles went on, somewhat nervously, and as though he feared to wound his uncle's susceptibilities, "my cousin and aunt have consented to receive trifling mementoes from me; will you not in your turn accept these sleeve-links, which are useless to me now; they may perhaps recall to your memory a poor boy, in a far-off country, whose thought will certainly often turn to those who are all that remain to him now of his family."

"Oh! my boy, my boy, you must not strip yourself like that for us——"

"What have you there, wife?" said the cooper, turning eagerly towards her. "Ah! a gold thimble? And you, little girl? Diamond clasps; what next! Come, I will accept your studs, my boy," he continued, squeezing Charles' hand. "But . . . you must let me pay . . . your . . . yes, your passage out to the Indies. Yes, I mean to pay your passage. Besides, my boy, when I estimated your jewelry I only took it at its value as metal, you see, without reckoning the workmanship, and it may be worth a trifle more on that account. So that is settled. I will pay you fifteen hundred francs . . . in livres; Cruchot will lend it me, for I have not a brass farthing in the house; unless Perrotet, who is getting behindhand with his dues, will pay me in coin. There! there! I will go and see about it," and he took up his hat, put on his gloves, and went forthwith.

"Then you are going?" said Eugénie, with sad, admiring eyes.

"I cannot help myself," he answered, with his head bent down.

For several days Charles looked, spoke, and behaved like a man who is in deep trouble, but who feels the weight of such heavy obligations, that his misfortunes only brace him for greater effort. He had ceased to pity himself; he had become a man. Never had Eugénie augured better of her cousin's character than she did on the day when she watched him

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come downstairs in his plain, black mourning suit, which set off his pale, sad face to such advantage. The two women had also gone into mourning, and went with Charles to the *Requiem* mass celebrated in the parish church for the soul of the late Guillaume Grandet.

Charles received letters from Paris as they took the mid-day meal; he opened and read them.

"Well, cousin," said Eugénie, in a low voice, "are your affairs going on satisfactorily?"

"Never put questions of that sort, my girl," remarked Grandet. "I never talk to you about my affairs, and why the devil should you meddle in your cousin's? Just let the boy alone."

"Oh! I have no secrets of any sort," said Charles.

"Tut, tut, tut. You will find out that you must bridle your tongue in business, nephew."

When the two lovers were alone in the garden, Charles drew Eugénie to the old bench under the walnut tree where they so often sat of late.

"I felt sure of Alphonse, and I was right," he said; "he has done wonders, and has settled my affairs prudently and loyally. All my debts in Paris are paid, my furniture sold well, and he tells me that he has acted on the advice of an old sea captain who had made the voyage to the Indies, and has invested the surplus money in ornaments and odds and ends for which there is a great demand out there. He has sent my packages to Nantes, where an East Indiaman is taking freight for Java, and so, Eugénie, in five days we must bid each other farewell, for a long while at any rate, and perhaps forever. My trading venture and the ten thousand francs which two of my friends have sent me, are a very poor start; I cannot expect to return for many years. Dear cousin, let us not consider ourselves bound in any way; I may die, and very likely some good opportunity for settling yourself——"

"You love me? . . ." she asked.

"Oh! yes, indeed," he replied, with an earnestness of manner that betokened a like earnestness in his feelings.

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"Then I will wait for you, Charles. *Dieu!* my father is looking out of his window," she exclaimed, evading her cousin, who had drawn closer to embrace her.

She fled to the archway; and seeing that Charles followed her thither, she retreated further, flung back the folding door at the foot of the staircase, and with no very clear idea, save that of flight, she rushed towards the darkest corner of the passage, outside Nanon's sleeping hole; and there Charles, who was close beside her, grasped both hands in his and pressed her to his heart; his arms went round her waist, Eugénie resisted no longer, and leaning against her lover she received and gave the purest, sweetest, and most perfect of all kisses.

"Dear Eugénie, a cousin is better than a brother; he can marry you," said Charles.

"Amen, so be it!" cried Nanon, opening the door behind them, and emerging from her den. Her voice startled the two lovers, who fled into the dining-room, where Eugénie took up her sewing, and Charles seized on Mme. Grandet's prayer book, opened it at the litanies of the Virgin, and began to read industriously.

"Quien!" said Nanon, "so we are all saying our prayers!"

As soon as Charles fixed the day for his departure, Grandet bustled about and affected to take the greatest interest in the whole matter. He was liberal with advice, and with anything else that cost him nothing, first seeking out a packer for Charles, and then, saying that the man wanted too much for his cases, setting to work with all his might to make them himself, using odd planks for the purpose. He was up betimes every morning planing, fitting, nailing deal boards together, squaring and shaping; and, in fact, he made some strong cases, packed all Charles' property in them, and undertook to send them by steamer down the Loire to Nantes in time to go by the merchant ship, and to insure them during the voyage.

Since that kiss given and taken in the passage, the hours

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sped with terrible rapidity for Eugénie. At times she thought of following her cousin; for of all ties that bind one human being to another, this passion of love is the closest and strongest, and those who know this, and know how every day shortens love's allotted span, and how not time alone but age and mortal sickness and all the untoward accidents of life combine to menace it,—these will know the agony that Eugénie suffered. She shed many tears as she walked up and down the little garden; it had grown so narrow for her now; the courtyard, the old house, and the town had all grown narrow, and her thoughts fared forth already across vast spaces of sea.

It was the day before the day of departure. That morning, while Grandet and Nanon were out of the house, the precious casket that held the two portraits was solemnly deposited in Eugénie's chest, beside the now empty velvet bag in the only drawer that could be locked, an installation which was not effected without many tears and kisses. When Eugénie locked the drawer and hid the key in her bosom, she had not the courage to forbid the kiss by which Charles sealed the act.

"The key shall always stay there, dear."

"Ah! well, my heart will always be there with it too."

"Oh! Charles, you should not say that," she said a little reproachfully.

"Are we not married?" he replied. "I have your word; take mine."

"Thine forever!" they said together, and repeated it a second time. No holier vow was ever made on earth; for Charles' love had received a moment's consecration in the presence of Eugénie's simple sincerity.

It was a melancholy group round the breakfast-table next morning. Even Nanon herself, in spite of Charles' gift of a new gown and a gilt cross, had a tear in her eye; but she was free to express her feelings and did so.

"Oh! that poor, delicate young gentleman who is going to sea," was the burden of her discourse.

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At half-past ten the whole family left the house to see Charles start for Nantes in the diligence. Nanon had let the dog loose, and locked the door, and meant to carry Charles' handbag. Every shopkeeper in the ancient street was in the doorway to watch the little procession pass. M. Cruchot joined them in the market-place.

"Eugénie," whispered her mother, "mind you do not cry!"

They reached the gateway of the inn, and there Grandet kissed Charles on both cheeks. "Well! nephew," he said, "set out poor and come back rich; you leave your father's honor in safe keeping. I—Grandet—will answer to you for that; you will only have to do your part——"

"Oh! uncle, this sweetens the bitterness of parting. Is not this the greatest gift you could possibly give me?"

Charles had broken in upon the old cooper's remarks before he quite understood their drift; he put his arms round his uncle's neck, and let fall tears of gratitude on the vine-grower's sunburned cheeks; Eugénie clasped her cousin's hand in one of hers, and her father's in the other, and held them tightly. Only the notary smiled to himself; he alone understood the worthy man, and he could not help admiring his astute cunning. The four Saumurois and a little group of onlookers hung about the diligence till the last moment; and looked after it until it disappeared across the bridge, and the sound of the wheels grew faint and distant.

"A good riddance!" said the cooper.

Luckily, no one but M. Cruchot heard this ejaculation; Eugénie and her mother had walked along the quay to a point of view whence they could still see the diligence, and stood there waving their handkerchiefs and watching Charles' answering signal till he was out of sight; then Eugénie turned.

"Oh! mother, mother, if I had God's power for one moment," she said.

To save further interruption to the course of the story, it is necessary to glance a little ahead, and give a brief account of the course of events in Paris, of Grandet's calculations,

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and the action taken by his worthy lieutenant the banker in the matter of Guillaume Grandet's affairs. A month after des Grassins had gone, Grandet received a certificate for a hundred thousand livres per annum of *rentes,* purchased at eighty francs. No information was ever forthcoming as to how and when the actual coin had been paid, or the receipt taken, which in due course had been exchanged for the certificate. The inventory and statement of his affairs which the miser left at his death threw no light upon the mystery, and Cruchot fancied that in some way or other Nanon must have been the unconscious instrument employed; for about that time the faithful serving-maid was away from home for four or five days, ostensibly to see after matters at Froidfond, as if its worthy owner were likely to forget anything there that required looking after! As for Guillaume Grandet's creditors, everything had happened as the cooper had intended and foreseen.

At the Bank of France (as everybody knows) they keep accurate lists of all the great fortunes in Paris or in the departments. The names of des Grassins and of Felix Grandet of Saumur were duly to be found inscribed therein; indeed, they shone conspicuous there as well-known names in the business world, as men who were not only financially sound, but owners of broad acres unencumbered by mortgages. And now it was said that des Grassins of Saumur had come to Paris with intent to call a meeting of the creditors of the firm of Guillaume Grandet; the shade of the wine merchant was to be spared the disgrace of protested bills. The seals were broken in the presence of the creditors, and the family notary proceeded to make out an inventory in due form.

Before very long, in fact, des Grassins called a meeting of the creditors, who with one voice appointed the banker of Saumur as trustee conjointly with François Keller, the head of a large business house, and one of the principal creditors, empowering them to take such measures as they thought fit, in order to save the family name (and the bills) from being dishonored. The fact that des Grassins was acting as his

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agent produced a hopeful tone in the meeting, and things went smoothly from the first; the banker did not find a single dissentient voice. No one thought of passing his bill to his profit and loss account, and each one said to himself—

"Grandet of Saumur is going to pay!"

Six months went by. The Parisian merchants had withdrawn the bills from circulation, and had consigned them to the depths of their portfolios. The cooper had gained his first point. Nine months after the first meeting the two trustees paid the creditors a dividend of forty-seven per cent. This sum had been raised by the sale of the late Guillaume Grandet's property, goods, chattels and general effects; the most scrupulous integrity characterized these proceedings; indeed, the whole affair was conducted with the most conscientious honesty, and the delighted creditors fell to admiring Grandet's wonderful, indubitable and high-minded probity. When these praises had duly circulated for a sufficient length of time, the creditors began to ask themselves when the remainder of their money would be forthcoming, and bethought them of collectively writing a letter to Grandet.

"Here we are!" was the old cooper's comment, as he flung the letter in the fire. "Patience, patience, my dear friends."

By way of a reply to the propositions contained in the letter, Grandet of Saumur required them to deposit with a notary all the bills and claims against the estate of his deceased brother, accompanying each with receipts for the payments already made. The accounts were to be audited, and the exact condition of affairs was to be ascertained. Innumerable difficulties were cleared away by this notion of the deposit.

A creditor, generally speaking, is a sort of maniac; there is no saying what a creditor will do. One day he is in a hurry to bring the thing to an end, the next he is all for fire and sword, a little later and he is sweetness and benignity itself. To-day, very probably, his wife is in a good humor, his youngest hope has just cut a tooth, everything is going on comfortably at home, he has no mind to abate his claims

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one jot; but to-morrow comes, and it rains, and he cannot go out; he feels low in his mind, and agrees hastily to anything and everything that is likely to settle the affair; the next morning brings counsel; he requires a guarantee, and by the end of the month he talks about an execution, the inhuman, bloodthirsty wretch! The creditor is not unlike that common or house sparrow on whose tail small children are encouraged to try to put a grain of salt—a pleasing simile which the creditor may twist to his own uses, and apply to his bills, from which he fondly hopes to derive some benefit at last. Grandet had observed these atmospheric variations among creditors; and his forecasts in the present case were correct, his brother's creditors were behaving in every respect exactly as he wished. Some waxed wroth, and flatly declined to have anything to do with the deposit, or to give up the vouchers.

"Good!" said Grandet; "that is all right!" He rubbed his hands as he read the letters which des Grassins wrote to him on the subject.

Yet others refused to consent to the aforesaid deposit unless their position was clearly defined in the first place; it was to be made without prejudice, and they reserved the right to declare the estate bankrupt should they deem it advisable. This opened a fresh correspondence, and occasioned a further delay, after which Grandet finally agreed to all the conditions, and as a consequence the more tractable creditors brought the recalcitrant to hear reason, and the deposit was made, not, however, without some grumbling.

"That old fellow is laughing in his sleeve at you and at us too," said they to des Grassins.

Twenty-three months after Guillaume Grandet's death, many of the merchants had forgotten all about their claims in the course of events in a business life in Paris, or they only thought of them to say to themselves—

"It begins to look as though the forty-seven per cent is about all I shall get out of that business."

The cooper had reckoned on the aid of Time, who, so he was wont to say, is a good fellow. By the end of the third

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year, des Grassins wrote to Grandet saying that he had induced most of the creditors to give up their bills, and that the amount now owing was only about ten per cent of the outstanding two million four hundred thousand francs. Grandet replied that there yet remained the notary and the stockbroker, whose failures had been the death of his brother; *they* were still alive. They might be solvent again by this time, and proceedings ought to be taken against them; something might be recovered in this way which would still further reduce the sum-total of the deficit.

When the fourth year drew to a close the deficit had been duly brought down to the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs; the limit appeared to have been reached. Six months were further spent in parleyings between the trustees and the creditors, and between Grandet and the trustees. In short, strong pressure being brought to bear upon Grandet of Saumur, he announced, somewhere about the ninth month of the same year, that his nephew, who had made a fortune in the East Indies, had signified his intention of settling in full all claims on his father's estate; and that meantime he could not take it upon himself to act, nor to defraud the creditors by winding up the affair before he had consulted his nephew; he added that he had written to him, and was now awaiting an answer.

The middle of the fifth year had been reached, and still the creditors were held in check by the magic words *in full,* let fall judiciously from time to time by the sublime cooper, who was laughing at them in his sleeve; "those PARISIANS," he would say to himself, with a mild oath, and a cunning smile would steal across his features.

In fact, a martyrdom unknown to the calendars of commerce was in store for the creditors. When next they appear in the course of this story, they will be found in exactly the same position that they were in now when Grandet had done with them. Consols went up to a hundred and fifteen, old Grandet sold out, and received from Paris about two million four hundred thousand francs in gold, which went into his

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wooden kegs to keep company with the six hundred thousand francs of interest which his investment had brought in.

Des Grassins stayed on in Paris, and for the following reasons. In the first place, he had been appointed a deputy; and in the second, he, the father of a family, bored by the exceeding dullness of existence in Saumur, was smitten with the charms of Mlle. Florine, one of the prettiest actresses of the Théâtre de Madame, and there was a recrudescence of the quarter-master in the banker. It is useless to discuss his conduct; at Saumur it was pronounced to be profoundly immoral. It was very lucky for his wife that she had brains enough to carry on the concern at Saumur in her own name, and could extricate the remains of her fortune, which had suffered not a little from M. des Grassins' extravagance and folly. But the quasi-widow was in a false position, and the Cruchotins did all that in them lay to make matters worse; she had to give up all hope of a match between her son and Eugénie Grandet, and married her daughter very badly. Adolphe des Grassins went to join his father in Paris, and there acquired, so it was said, an unenviable reputation. The triumph of the Cruchotins was complete.

"Your husband has taken leave of his senses," Grandet took occasion to remark as he accommodated Mme. des Grassins with a loan (on good security). "I am very sorry for you; you are a nice little woman."

"Ah!" sighed the poor lady, "who could have believed that day when he set out for Paris to see after that business of yours that he was hurrying to his own ruin?"

"Heaven is my witness, madame, that to the very last I did all I could to prevent him, and M. le Président was dying to go; but we know now why your husband was so set upon it."

Clearly, therefore, Grandet lay under no obligation to des Grassins.

In every situation a woman is bound to suffer in many ways that a man does not, and to feel her troubles more acutely than he can; for a man's vigor and energy is con-

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stantly brought into play; he acts and thinks, comes and goes, busies himself in the present, and looks to the future for consolation. This was what Charles was doing. But a woman cannot help herself—hers is a passive part; she is left face to face with her trouble, and has nothing to divert her mind from it; she sounds the depths of the abyss of sorrow, and its dark places are filled with her prayers and tears. So it was with Eugénie. She was beginning to understand that the web of a woman's life will always be woven of love and sorrow and hope and fear and self-sacrifice; hers was to be a woman's lot in all things without a woman's consolations and her moments of happiness (to make use of Bossuet's wonderful illustration) were to be like the scattered nails driven into the wall, when all collected together they scarcely filled the hollow of the hand. Troubles seldom keep us waiting for them, and for Eugénie they were gathering thick and fast.

The day after Charles had gone, the Grandet household fell back into the old ways of life; there was no difference for any one but Eugénie—for her the house had grown very empty all on a sudden. Charles' room should remain just as he had left it; Mme. Grandet and Nanon lent themselves to this whim of hers, willingly maintained the *statu quo*, and said nothing to her father.

"Who knows?" Eugénie said. "He may come back to us sooner than we think."

"Ah! I wish I could see him here again," replied Nanon. "I could get on with him well enough! He was very nice, and an excellent gentleman; and he was pretty-like, his hair curled over his head just like a girl's."

Eugénie gazed at Nanon.

"Holy Virgin! mademoiselle, with such eyes, you are like to lose your soul. You shouldn't look at people in that way."

From that day Mlle. Grandet's beauty took a new character. The grave thoughts of love that slowly enveloped her soul, the dignity of a woman who is beloved, gave to her face the sort of radiance that early painters expressed by the au-

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reole. Before her cousin came into her life, Eugénie might have been compared to the Virgin as yet unconscious of her destiny; and now that he had passed out of it, she seemed like the Virgin Mother; she, too, bore love in her heart. Spanish art has depicted these two Marys, so different each from each—Christianity, with its many symbols, knows no more glorious types than these.

The day after Charles had left them, Eugénie went to mass (as she had resolved to do daily), and on her way back bought a map of the world from the only bookseller in the town. This she pinned to the wall beside her glass, so that she might follow the course of her cousin's voyage to the Indies; and night and morning might be beside him for a little while on that far-off vessel, and see him and ask all the endless questions she longed to ask.

"Are you well? Are you not sad? Am I in your thoughts when you see the star that you told me about? You made me see how beautiful it was."

In the morning she used to sit like one in a dream under the great walnut tree, on the old gray, lichen-covered, worm-eaten bench where they had talked so kindly and so foolishly, where they had built such fair castles in the air in which to live. She thought of the future as she watched the little strip of sky shut in by the high walls on every side, then her eyes wandered over the old buttressed wall and the roof—Charles' room lay beneath it. In short, this solitary persistent love mingling with all her thoughts became the substance, or, as our forefathers would have said, the "stuff" of her life.

If Grandet's self-styled friends came in of an evening, she would seem to be in high spirits, but the liveliness was only assumed; she used to talk about Charles with her mother and Nanon the whole morning through, and Nanon—who was of the opinion that without faltering in her duty to her master she might yet feel for her young mistress' troubles—Nanon spoke on this wise—

"If I had had a sweetheart, I would have . . . I would have gone with him to hell. I would have . . .

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well, then, I would just have laid down my life for him, but . . . no such chance! I shall die without knowing what it is to live. Would you believe it, mam'selle, there is that old Cornoiller, who is a good man all the same, dangling about after my savings, just like the others who come here paying court to you and sniffing after the master's money. I see through it; I may be as big as a hay stack, but I am as sharp as a needle yet. Well! and yet do you know, mam'selle, it may not be love, but I rather like it."

In this way two months went by. The secret that bound the three women so closely together had brought a new interest into the household life hitherto so monotonous. For them Charles still dwelt in the house, and came and went beneath the old gray rafters of the parlor. Every morning and evening Eugénie opened the dressing-case and looked at her aunt's portrait. Her mother, suddenly coming into her room one Sunday morning, found her absorbed in tracing out a likeness to Charles in the lady of the miniature, and Mme. Grandet learned for the first time a terrible secret, how that Eugénie had parted with her treasures and had taken the case in exchange.

"You have let him have it all!" cried the terrified mother. "What will you say to your father on New Year's Day when he asks to see your gold?"

Eugénie's eyes were set in a fixed stare; the horror of this thought so filled the women that half the morning went by, and they were distressed to find themselves too late for high mass, and were only in time for the military mass. The year 1819 was almost over; there were only three more days left. In three days a terrible drama would begin, a drama undignified by poison, dagger or bloodshed, but fate dealt scarcely more cruelly with the princely house of Atreus than with the actors in this bourgeois tragedy.

"What is to become of us?" said Mme. Grandet, laying down her knitting on her knee.

Poor mother! all the events of the past two months had sadly hindered the knitting, the woolen cuffs for winter wear

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were not finished yet, a homely and apparently insignificant fact which was to work trouble enough for her. For want of the warm cuffs she caught a chill after a violent perspiration brought on by one of her husband's fearful outbursts of rage.

"My poor child, I have been thinking, that if you had only told me about this, we should have had time to write to M. des Grassins in Paris. He might have managed to send us some gold pieces like those of yours; and although Grandet knows the look of them so well, still perhaps . . ."

"But where could we have found so much money?"

"I would have raised it on my property. Besides, M. des Grassins would have befriended us . . ."

"There is not time enough now," faltered Eugénie in a smothered voice. "To-morrow morning we shall have to go to his room to wish him a happy New Year, shall we not?"

"Oh! Eugénie, why not go and see the Cruchots about it?"

"No, no, that would be putting ourselves in their power; I should be entirely in their hands then. Besides, I have made up my mind. I have acted quite rightly, and I repent of nothing; God will protect me. May His holy will be done! Ah! if you had read that letter, mother, you would have thought of nothing but him."

The next morning, January 1, 1820, the mother and daughter were in an agony of distress that they could not hide; sheer terror suggested the simple expedient of omitting the solemn visit to Grandet's room. The bitter weather served as an excuse; the winter of 1819-20 was the coldest that had been known for years, and snow lay deep on the roofs.

Mme. Grandet called to her husband as soon as she heard him stirring, "Grandet, just let Nanon light a bit of fire in here for me, the air is so sharp that I am shivering under the bedclothes, and at my time of life I must take care of myself. And then," she went on after a little pause, "Eu-

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génie shall come in here to dress. The poor girl may do herself a mischief if she dresses in her own room in such cold. We will come downstairs into the sitting-room and wish you a happy New Year there by the fire."

"Tut, tut, tut, what a tongue! What a way to begin the year, Mme. Grandet! You have never said so much in your life before. You have not had a sop of bread in wine, I suppose?"

There was a moment's pause. Doubtless his wife's proposal suited his notions, for he said, "Very well, I will do as you wish, Mme. Grandet. You really are a good sort of woman, it would be a pity for you to expire before you are due, though as a rule, the La Bertellières make old bones, don't they, hey?" he cried, after a pause. "Well, their money has fallen in at last; I forgive them," and he coughed.

"You are in spirits this morning," said the poor wife.

"I always am in spirits."

Hey! hey! cooper gay,
Mend your tub and take your pay.

He had quite finished dressing and came into his wife's room. "Yes, *nom d'un petit bonhomme!* it is a mighty hard frost, all the same. We shall have a good breakfast to-day, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a pâté de foies gras, truffled! I am going round to the coach office to see after it. He should have sent a double napoleon for Eugénie along with it," said the cooper, coming closer, and lowering his voice. "I have no gold, I certainly had a few old coins still left, I may tell you that in confidence, but I had to let them go in the course of business," and by way of celebrating the first day of the year he kissed his wife on the forehead.

"Eugénie," cried the kind mother, as soon as Grandet had gone, "I don't know which side of the bed your father got out on, but he is in a good humor this morning. Pshaw! we shall pull through."

"What can have come over the master?" cried Nanon as

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she came into the room to light the fire. "First of all, he says, 'Good morning, great stupid, a happy New Year! Go upstairs and light a fire in my wife's room; she is feeling cold.' I thought I must be off my head when I saw him holding out his hand with a six-franc piece in it that hadn't been clipped a bit! There! madame, only look at it! Oh! he is a worthy man, all the same—he is a good man, he is. There are some as get harder-hearted the older they grow; but he turns sweeter, like your cordial that improves with keeping. He is a very good and a very excellent man . . ."

Grandet's speculation had been completely successful; this was the cause of his high spirits. M. des Grassins—after deducting various amounts which the cooper owed him, partly for discounting Dutch bills to the amount of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and partly for advances of money for the purchase of a hundred thousand livres worth of consols—M. des Grassins was sending him, by diligence, thirty thousand francs in crowns, the remainder (after the aforesaid deductions had been made) of the cooper's half-yearly dividends, and informed Grandet that consols were steadily rising. They stood at eighty-nine at the present moment, and well-known capitalists were buying for the next account at the end of January at ninety-two. In two months Grandet had made twelve per cent on his capital; he had straightened his accounts; and henceforward he would receive fifty thousand francs every half year, clear of taxes or any outgoing expenses. In short, he had grasped the theory of consols (a class of investment of which the provincial mind is exceedingly shy), and looking ahead, he beheld himself the master of six millions of francs in five years' time—six millions, which would go on accumulating with scarcely any trouble on his part—six millions of francs! And there was the value of his landed property to add to this; he saw himself in a fair way to build up a colossal fortune. The six francs given to Nanon were perhaps in reality the payment for an immense service which the girl had unwittingly done her master.

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"Oho! what can Goodman Grandet be after? He is running as if there were a fire somewhere," the shopkeepers said to each other as they took down their shutters that New Year's morning.

A little later when they saw him coming back from the quay followed by a porter from the coach office, who was wheeling a barrow piled up with little bags full of something——

"Ah!" said they, "water always makes for the river, the old boy was hurrying after his crowns."

"They flow in on him from Paris, and Froidfond, and Holland," said one.

"He will buy Saumur before he has done," cried another.

"He does not care a rap for the cold; he is always looking after his business," said a woman to her husband.

"Hi! M. Grandet! if you have more of that than you know what to do with, I can help you to get rid of some of it."

"Eh! they are only coppers," said the vinegrower.

"Silver, he means," said the porter in a low voice.

"Keep a still tongue in your head, if you want me to bear you in mind," said the goodman as he opened the door.

"Oh! the old fox, I thought he was deaf," said the porter to himself, "but it looks as though he could hear well enough in cold weather."

"Here is a franc for a New Year's gift, and keep quiet about this. Off with you! Nanon will bring back the barrow. Nanon!" cried Grandet, "are the women-folk gone to mass?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, look sharp and lend a hand here, then," he cried, and loaded her with the bags. In another minute the crowns were safely transferred to his room, where he locked himself in.

"Thump on the wall when breakfast is ready," he called through the door, "and take the wheelbarrow back to the coach office."

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It was ten o'clock before the family breakfasted.

"Your father will not ask to see your gold now," said Mme. Grandet as they came back from mass; "and if he does, you can shiver and say it is too cold to go upstairs for it. We shall have time to make up the money again before your birthday . . ."

Grandet came down the stairs with his head full of schemes for transforming the five-franc pieces just received from Paris into gold coin, which should be neither clipped nor light weight. He thought of his admirably-timed investment in Government stock, and made up his mind that he would continue to put his money into consols until they rose to a hundred francs. Such meditations as these boded ill for Eugénie. As soon as he came in the two women wished him a prosperous New Year, each in her own way; Mme. Grandet was grave and ceremonious, but his daughter put her arms round his neck and kissed him. "Aha! child," he said, kissing her on both cheeks, "I am thinking and working for you, you see! . . . I want you to be happy and if you are to be happy, you must have money; for you won't get anything without it. Look! here is a brand new napoleon, I sent to Paris on purpose for it. *Nom d'un petit bonhomme!* there is not a speck of gold in the house, except yours, you are the one who has the gold. Let me see your gold, little girl."

"Bah! it is too cold, let us have breakfast," Eugénie answered.

"Well, then, after breakfast we will have a look at it, eh? It will be good for our digestions. That great des Grassins sent us this, all the same," he went on, "so get your breakfasts, children, for it costs us nothing. Des Grassins is going on nicely; I am pleased with him; the old fish is doing Charles a service, and all free gratis. Really, he is managing poor dear Grandet's affairs very cleverly. Ououh! ououh!" he cried, with his mouth full, "this is good! Eat away, wife; there is enough here to last us for two days at least."

"I am not hungry. I am very poorly, you know that very well."

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"Oh! Ah! but you have a sound constitution; you are a La Bertellière, and you can put away a great deal without any fear of damaging yourself. You may be a trifle sallow, but I have a liking for yellow myself."

The prisoner shrinking from a public and ignominious death could not well await his doom with a more sickening dread than Mme. Grandet and Eugénie felt as they foresaw the end of breakfast and the inevitable sequel. The more boisterously the cooper talked and ate, the lower sank their spirits; but to the girl, in this crisis, a certain support was not lacking, love was strong within her. "I would die a thousand deaths," she thought, "for him, for him!"

She looked at her mother, and courage and defiance shone in her eyes.

By eleven o'clock they had finished breakfast. "Clear everything away," Grandet told Nanon, "but leave us the table. We can look over your little treasure more comfortably so," he said with his eyes on Eugénie. *"Little,* said I? 'Tis not so small, though, upon my word. Your coins altogether are actually worth five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs, then with forty more this morning, that makes six thousand francs all but one. Well, I will give you another franc to make up the sum, because, you see, little girl . . . Well! now, why are you listening to us? Just take yourself off, Nanon, and set about your work!"

Nanon vanished.

"Listen, Eugénie, you must let me have your gold. You will not refuse to let your papa have it? Eh, little daughter?"

Neither of the women spoke.

"I myself have no gold left. I had some once, but I have none now. I will give you six thousand francs in silver for it, and you shall invest it; I will show you how. There is really no need to think of a *dozen.* When you are married (which will be before very long) I will find a husband for you who will give you the handsomest *dozen* that has ever been heard of hereabouts. There is a splendid opportunity

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just now; you can invest your six thousand francs in Government stock, and every six months, when dividends are due, you will have about two hundred francs coming in, all clear of taxes, and no repairs to pay for, and no frosts nor hail nor bad seasons, none of all the tiresome drawbacks you have to lay your account with if you put your money into land. You don't like to part with your gold, eh? Is that it, little girl? Never mind, let me have it all the same. I will look out for gold coins for you, ducats from Holland, and genovines and Portuguese moidores and rupees, the Mogul's rupees; and what with the coins I shall give you on your birthday and so forth, you will have half your little hoard again in three years' time, besides the three thousand francs in the funds. What do you say, little girl? Look up, child! There! there! bring it here, my pet. You owe me a good kiss for telling you business secrets and mysteries of the life and death of five-franc pieces. Five-franc pieces! Yes, indeed, the coins live and gad about just like men do; they go and come and sweat and multiply."

Eugénie rose and made a few steps towards the door; then she turned abruptly, looked her father full in the face, and said—

"All *my* gold is gone; I have none left."

"All your gold is gone!" echoed Grandet, starting up, as a horse might rear when the cannon thunders not ten paces from him.

"Yes, it is all gone."

"Eugénie! you are dreaming!"

"No."

"By my father's pruning-hook!" Whenever the cooper swore in this fashion, the floors and ceilings trembled.

"Lord have mercy!" cried Nanon; "how white the mistress is!"

"Grandet, you will kill me with your angry fits," said the poor wife.

"Tut, tut, tut; none of your family ever die. Now, Eugénie! what have you done with your money?" he burst out as he turned upon her.

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The girl was on her knees beside Mme. Grandet.

"Look! sir," she said, "my mother is very ill . . . do not kill her."

Grandet was alarmed; his wife's dark, sallow complexion had grown so white.

"Nanon, come and help me up to bed," she said in a feeble voice. "This is killing me . . ."

Nanon gave an arm to her mistress, and Eugénie supported her on the other side; but it was only with the greatest difficulty that they reached her room, for the poor mother's strength completely failed her, and she stumbled at every step. Grandet was left alone in the parlor. After a while, however, he came part of the way upstairs, and called out—

"Eugénie! Come down again as soon as your mother is in bed."

"Yes, father."

In no long time she returned to him, after comforting her mother as best she could.

"Now, my daughter," Grandet addressed her, "you will tell me where your money is."

"If I am not perfectly free to do as I like with your presents, father, please take them back again," said Eugénie coldly. She went to the chimney-piece for the napoleon, and gave it to her father.

Grandet pounced upon it, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"I will never give you anything again, I know," he said, biting his thumb at her. "You look down on your father, do you? You have no confidence in him? Do you know what a father is? If he is not everything to you, he is nothing. *Now;* where is your gold?"

"I do respect you and love you, father, in spite of your anger; but I would very humbly point out to you that I am twenty-two years old. You have told me that I am of age often enough for me to know it. I have done as I liked with my money, and rest assured that it is in good hands——"

"Whose?"

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"That is an inviolable secret," she said. "Have you not your secrets?"

"Am I not the head of my family? May I not be allowed to have my own business affairs?"

"This is my own affair."

"It must be something very unsatisfactory, Mlle. Grandet, if you cannot tell your own father about it."

"It is perfectly satisfactory, and I cannot tell my father about it."

"Tell me, at any rate, when you parted with your gold."

Eugénie shook her head.

"You still had it on your birthday, hadn't you? Eh?"

But if greed had made her father crafty, love had taught Eugénie to be wary; she shook her head again.

"Did any one ever hear of such obstinacy, or of such a robbery?" cried Grandet, in a voice which gradually rose till it rang through the house. "What! *here,* in my house, in my own house, some one has taken your gold! Taken all the gold that there was in the place! And I am not to know who it was? Gold is a precious thing. The best of girls go wrong and throw themselves away one way or another; that happens among great folk, and even among decent citizens; but think of throwing gold away! For you gave it to somebody, I suppose, eh?"

Eugénie gave no sign.

"Did any one ever see such a daughter! Can you be a child of mine? If you have parted with your money, you must have a receipt for it——"

"Was I free to do as I wished with it—Yes or No? Was it mine?"

"Why, you are a child."

"I am of age."

At first Grandet was struck dumb by his daughter daring to argue with him, and in this way! He turned pale, stamped, swore, and finding words at last, he shouted—

"Accursed serpent! Miserable girl! Oh! you know well that I love you, and you take advantage of it! You un-

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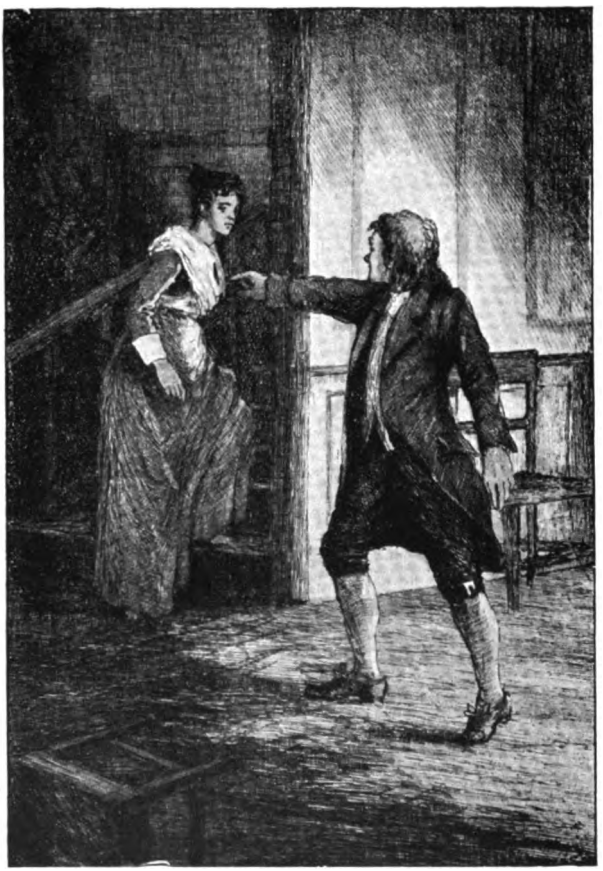

"Do you hear what I say? Go!"

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"Do you hear what I say? Go!"

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grateful child! She would rob and murder her own father! *Pardieu!* you would have thrown all we have at the feet of that vagabond with the morocco boots. By my father's pruning-hook, I cannot disinherit you, but *nom d'un tonneau,* I can curse you; you and your cousin and your children. Nothing good can come out of this; do you hear? If it was to Charles that . . . But, no, that is impossible. What if that miserable puppy should have robbed me?"

He glared at his daughter, who was still silent and unmoved.

"She does not stir! She does not flinch! She is more of a Grandet than I am. You did not give your gold away for nothing, anyhow. Come, now; tell me about it?"

Eugénie looked up at her father; her satirical glance exasperated him.

"Eugénie, this is my house; so long as you are under your father's roof you must do as your father bids you. The priests command you to obey me."

Eugénie bent her head again.

"You are wounding all my tenderest feelings," he went on. "Get out of my sight until you are ready to obey me. Go to your room and stay there until I give you leave to come out of it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. Do you hear what I say? Go!"

Eugénie burst into tears, and fled away to her mother. Grandet took several turns in his garden without heeding the snow or the cold; then, suspecting that his daughter would be in his wife's room, and delighted with the idea of catching them in flagrant disobedience to orders, he climbed the stairs as stealthily as a cat, and suddenly appeared in Mme. Grandet's room. He was right; she was stroking Eugénie's hair, and the girl lay with her face hidden in her mother's breast.

"Poor child! Never mind, your father will relent."

"She has no longer a father!" said the cooper. "Is it really possible, Mme. Grandet, that we have brought such a disobedient daughter into the world? A pretty bringing up; and pious, too, above all things! Well! how is it you are

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not in your room? Come, off to prison with you; to prison, miss."

"Do you mean to take my daughter away from me, sir?" said Mme. Grandet, as she raised a flushed face and bright, feverish eyes.

"If you want to keep her, take her along with you, and the house will be rid of you both at once. . . . *Tonnerre!* Where is the gold? What has become of the gold?"

Eugénie rose to her feet, looked proudly at her father, and went into her room; the goodman turned the key in the door.

"Nanon!" he shouted, "you can rake out the fire in the parlor;" then he came back and sat down in an easy-chair that stood between the fire and his wife's bedside, saying as he did so, "Of course she gave her gold to that miserable seducer Charles, who only cared for our money."

Mme. Grandet's love for her daughter gave her courage in the face of this danger; to all appearance she was deaf, dumb, and blind to all that was implied by this speech. She turned on her bed so as to avoid the angry glitter of her husband's eyes.

"I knew nothing about all this," she said. "Your anger makes me so ill, that if my forebodings come true I shall only leave this room when they carry me out feet foremost. I think you might have spared me this scene, sir. I, at all events, have never caused you any vexation. Your daughter loves you, and I am sure she is as innocent as a new-born babe; so do not make her miserable, and take back your word. This cold is terribly sharp; it might make her seriously ill."

"I shall neither see her nor speak to her. She shall stop in her room on bread and water until she has done as her father bids her. What the devil! the head of a family ought to know when gold goes out of his house, and where it goes. She had the only rupees that there are in France, for aught I know; then there were genovines besides, and Dutch ducats——"

"Eugénie is our only child, and even if she had flung them into the water——"

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"Into the water!" shouted the worthy cooper. *"Into the water!* Mme. Grandet, you are raving! When I say a thing, I mean it, as you know. If you want to have peace in the house, get her to confess to you, and worm this secret out of her. Women understand each other, and are cleverer at this sort of thing than we are. Whatever she may have done, I certainly shall not eat her. Is she afraid of me? If she had covered her cousin with gold from head to foot, he is safe on the high seas by this time, hein? We cannot run after him——"

"Really, sir . . ." his wife began.

But Mme. Grandet's nature had developed during her daughter's trouble; she felt more keenly, and perhaps her thoughts moved more quickly, or it may be that excitement and the strain upon her over-wrought nerves had sharpened her mental faculties. She saw the wen on her husband's face twitch ominously even as she began to speak, and changed her purpose without changing her voice.

"Really, sir, have I any more authority over her than you have? She has never said a word about it to me. She takes after you."

"Goodness! your tongue is hung in the middle this morning! Tut, tut, tut; you are going to fly in my face, I suppose? Perhaps you and she are both in it."

He glared at his wife.

"Really, M. Grandet, if you want to kill me, you have only to keep on as you are doing. I tell you, sir, and if it were to cost me my life, I would say it again—you are too hard on your daughter; she is a great deal more sensible than you are. The money belonged to her; she could only have made a good use of it, and our good works ought to be known to God alone. Sir, I implore you, take Eugénie back into favor. It will lessen the effect of the shock your anger gave me, and perhaps will save my life. My daughter, sir; give me back my daughter!"

"I am off," he said. "It is unbearable here in my house, when a mother and daughter talk and argue as if . . .

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Brooouh! Pouah! You have given me bitter New Year's gifts, Eugénie!" he called. "Yes, yes, cry away! You shall repent it, do you hear? What is the good of taking the sacrament six times a quarter if you give your father's gold away on the sly to an idle rascal who will break your heart when you have nothing else left to give him? You will find out what he is, that Charles of yours, with his morocco boots and his stand-off airs. He can have no heart and no conscience either, when he dares to carry off a poor girl's money without the consent of her parents."

As soon as the street-door was shut, Eugénie stole out of her room and came to her mother's bedside.

"You were very brave for your daughter's sake," she said.

"You see where crooked ways lead us, child! . . . You have made me tell a lie."

"Oh! mother, I will pray to God to let all the punishment fall on me."

"Is it true?" asked Nanon, coming upstairs in dismay, "that mademoiselle here is to be put on bread and water for the rest of her life?"

"What does it matter, Nanon?" asked Eugénie calmly.

"Why, before I would eat 'kitchen' while the daughter of the house is eating dry bread, I would . . . no, no, it won't do."

"Don't say a word about it, Nanon," Eugénie warned her.

"It would stick in my throat; but you shall see."

Grandet dined alone for the first time in twenty-four years.

"So you are a widower, sir," said Nanon. "It is a very dismal thing to be a widower when you have a wife and daughter in the house."

"I did not speak to you, did I? Keep a still tongue in your head, or you will have to go. What have you in that saucepan that I can hear boiling away on the stove?"

"Some dripping that I am melting down——"

"There will be some people here this evening; light the fire."

The Cruchots and their friends, Mme. des Grassins and

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her son, all came in about eight o'clock, and to their amazement saw neither Mme. Grandet nor her daughter.

"My wife is not very well to-day, and Eugénie is upstairs with her," replied the old cooper, without a trace of perturbation on his face.

After an hour spent in more or less trivial talk, Mme. des Grassins, who had gone upstairs to see Mme. Grandet, came down again to the dining-room, and was met with a general inquiry of "How is Mme. Grandet?"

"She is very far from well," the lady said gravely. "Her health seems to me to be in a very precarious state. At her time of life you ought to take great care of her, papa Grandet."

"We shall see," said the vinegrower abstractedly, and the whole party took leave of him. As soon as the Cruchots were out in the street and the door was shut behind them, Mme. des Grassins turned to them and said, "Something has happened among the Grandets. The mother is very ill; she herself has no idea how ill she is, and the girl's eyes are red, as if she had been crying for a long while. Are they wanting to marry her against her will?"

That night, when the cooper had gone to bed, Nanon, in list slippers, stole up to Eugénie's room, and displayed a raised pie, which she had managed to bake in a saucepan.

"Here, mademoiselle," said the kind soul, "Cornoiller brought a hare for me. You eat so little that the pie will last you for quite a week, and there is no fear of its spoiling in this frost. You shall not live on dry bread, at any rate; it is not at all good for you."

"Poor Nanon!" said Eugénie, as she pressed the girl's hand.

"I have made it very dainty and nice, and *he* never found out about it. I paid for the lard and the bay-leaves out of my six francs; I can surely do as I like with my own money," and the old servant fled, thinking that she heard Grandet stirring.

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Several months went by. The cooper went to see his wife at various times in the day, and never mentioned his daughter's name—never saw her, nor made the slightest allusion to her. Mme. Grandet's health grew worse and worse; she had not once left her room since that terrible January morning. But nothing shook the old cooper's determination; he was hard, cold, and unyielding as a block of granite. He came and went, his manner of life was in nowise altered; but he did not stammer now, and he talked less; perhaps, too, in matters of business, people found him harder than before, but errors crept into his book-keeping.

Something had certainly happened in the Grandet family, both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed on that head; and "What can be the matter with the Grandets?" became a stock question which people asked each other at every social gathering in Saumur.

Eugénie went regularly to church, escorted by Nanon. If Mme. des Grassins spoke to her in the porch as she came out, the girl would answer evasively, and the lady's curiosity remained ungratified. But after two months spent in this fashion it was almost impossible to hide the real state of affairs from Mme. des Grassins or from the Cruchots; a time came when all pretexts were exhausted, and Eugénie's constant absence still demanded an explanation. A little later, though no one could say how or when the secret leaked out, it became common property, and the whole town knew that ever since New Year's Day Mlle. Grandet had been locked up in her room by her father's orders, and that there she lived on bread and water in solitary confinement, and without a fire. Nanon, it was reported, cooked dainties for her, and brought food secretly to her room at night. Further particulars were known. It was even said that only when Grandet was out of the house could the young girl nurse her mother, or indeed see her at all.

People blamed Grandet severely. He was regarded as an outlaw, as it were, by the whole town; all his hardness, his bad faith was remembered against him, and every one

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shunned him. They whispered and pointed at him as he went by; and as his daughter passed along the crooked street on her way to mass or to vespers, with Nanon at her side, people would hurry to their windows and look curiously at the wealthy heiress' face—a face so sad and so divinely sweet.

The town gossip reached her ears as slowly as it reached her father's. Her imprisonment and her father's displeasure were as nothing to her; had she not her map of the world? And from her window could she not see the little bench, the old wall, and the garden walks? Was not the sweetness of those past kisses still upon her lips? So, sustained by love and by the consciousness of her innocence in the sight of God, she could patiently endure her solitary life and her father's anger; but there was another sorrow, so deep and so overwhelming that Eugénie could not find a refuge from it. The gentle, patient mother was gradually passing away; it seemed as if the beauty of her soul shone out more and more brightly in those dark days as she drew nearer to the tomb. Eugénie often bitterly blamed herself for this illness, telling herself that she had been the innocent cause of the painful malady that was slowly consuming her mother's life; and, in spite of all her mother said to comfort her, this remorseful feeling made her cling more closely to the love she was to lose so soon. Every morning, as soon as her father had left the house, she went to sit at her mother's bedside. Nanon used to bring her breakfast to her there. But for poor Eugénie in her sadness, this suffering was almost more than she could bear; she looked at her mother's face, and then at Nanon, with tears in her eyes, and was dumb; she did not dare to speak of her cousin now. It was always Mme. Grandet who began to talk of him; it was she who was forced to say, "Where is *he*? Why does *he* not write?"

Neither mother nor daughter had any idea of the distance.

"Let us think of him without talking about him, mother," Eugénie would answer. "You are suffering; you come before every one;" and when she said, "every one," Eugénie meant *"him."*

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"I have no wish to live any longer, children," Mme. Grandet used to say. "God in His protecting care has led me to look forward joyfully to death as the end of my sorrows."

Everything that she said was full of Christian piety. For the first few months of the year her husband breakfasted in her room, and always, as he walked restlessly about, he heard the same words from her, uttered with angelic gentleness, but with firmness; the near approach of death had given her the courage which she had lacked all her life.

"Thank you, sir, for the interest which you take in my health," she said in response to the merest formality of an inquiry; "but if you really wish to sweeten the bitterness of my last moments, and to alleviate my sufferings, forgive our daughter, and act like a Christian, a husband, and a father."

At these words Grandet would come and sit down by the bed, much as a man who is threatened by a shower betakes himself resignedly to the nearest sheltering archway. He would say nothing, and his wife might say what she liked. To the most pathetic, loving, and fervent prayers, he would reply, "My poor wife, you are looking a bit pale to-day."

His daughter seemed to have passed entirely out of his mind; the mention of her name brought no change over his stony face and hard-set mouth. He always gave the same vague answers to her pleadings, couched in almost the same words, and did not heed his wife's white face, nor the tears that flowed down her cheeks.

"May God forgive you, as I do, sir," she said. "You will have need of mercy some day."

Since his wife's illness had begun he had not ventured to make use of his formidable "Tut, tut, tut," but his tyranny was not relaxed one whit by his wife's angelic gentleness.

Her plain face was growing almost beautiful now as a beautiful nature showed itself more and more, and her soul grew absolute. It seemed as if the spirit of prayer had purified and refined the homely features—as if they were lit up by some inner light. Which of us has not known such faces as this, and seen their final transfiguration—the triumph of

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a soul that has dwelt for so long among pure and lofty thoughts that they set their seal unmistakably upon the roughest lineaments at last? The sight of this transformation wrought by the physical suffering which stripped the soul of the rags of humanity that hid it, had a certain effect, however feeble, upon that man of bronze—the old cooper. A stubborn habit of silence had succeeded to his old contemptuous ways, a wish to keep up his dignity as a father of a family was apparently the motive for this course.

The faithful Nanon no sooner showed herself in the market place than people began to rail at her master and to make jokes at his expense; but however loudly public opinion condemned old Grandet, the maid-servant, jealous for the honor of the family, stoutly defended him.

"Well, now," she would say to those who spoke ill of her master, "don't we all grow harder as we grow older? And would you have him different from other people? Just hold your lying tongues. Mademoiselle lives like a queen. She is all by herself no doubt, but she likes it; and my master and mistress have their very good reasons for what they do."

At last, one evening towards the end of spring, Mme. Grandet, feeling that this trouble, even more than her illness, was shortening her days, and that any further attempt on her part to obtain forgiveness for Eugénie was hopeless, confided her troubles to the Cruchots.

"To put a girl of twenty-three on a diet of bread and water! . . ." cried the President de Bonfons, "and without just and sufficient cause! Why, that constitutes legal cruelty; she might lodge a complaint; *in as much as*——"

"Come, nephew," said the notary, "that is enough of your law court jargon. Be easy, madame; I will bring this imprisonment to an end to-morrow."

Eugénie heard, and came out of her room.

"Gentlemen," she said, impelled by a certain pride, "do nothing in this matter, I beg of you. My father is master in his own house, and so long as I live under his roof I ought to obey him. No one has any right to criticise his conduct; he is

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answerable to God, and to God alone. If you have any friendly feeling for me, I entreat you to say nothing whatever about this. If you expose my father to censure, you would lower us all in the eyes of the world. I am very thankful to you, gentlemen, for the interest you have taken in me, and you will oblige me still further if you will put a stop to the gossip that is going on in the town. I only heard of it by accident."

"She is right," said Mme. Grandet.

"Mademoiselle, the best possible way to stop people's talk would be to set you at liberty," said the old notary respectfully; he was struck with the beauty which solitude and love and sadness had brought into Eugénie's face.

"Well, Eugénie, leave it in M. Cruchot's hands, as he seems to think success is certain. He knows your father, and he knows, too, how to put the matter before him. You and your father must be reconciled at all costs, if you want me to be happy during the little time I have yet to live."

The next morning Grandet went out to take a certain number of turns round the little garden, a habit that he had fallen into during Eugénie's incarceration. He chose to take the air while Eugénie was dressing; and when he had reached the great walnut tree, he stood behind it for a few moments and looked at her window. He watched her as she brushed her long hair, and there was a sharp struggle doubtless, between his natural stubborn will and a longing to take his daughter in his arms and kiss her.

He would often go to sit on the little worm-eaten bench where Charles and Eugénie had vowed to love each other forever; and she, his daughter, also watched her father furtively, or looked into her glass and saw him reflected there, and the garden and the bench. If he rose and began to walk again, she went to sit in the window. It was pleasant to her to be there. She studied the bit of old wall, the delicate sprays of wild flowers that grew in its crevices, the maidenhair fern, the morning glories, and a little plant with thick leaves and white or yellow flowers, a sort of stone-crop that grows everywhere among the vines at Saumur and Tours.

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Old M. Cruchot came early on a bright June morning and found the vinegrower sitting on the little bench with his back against the wall, absorbed in watching his daughter.

"What can I do for you, M. Cruchot?" he asked, as he became aware of the notary's presence.

"I have come about a matter of business."

"Aha! Have you some gold to exchange for crowns?"

"No, no. It is not a question of money this time, but of your daughter Eugénie. Everybody is talking about you and her."

"What business is it of theirs? A man's house is his castle."

"Just so; and a man can kill himself if he has a mind, or he can do worse, he can throw his money out of the windows."

"What?"

"Eh! but your wife is very ill, my friend. You ought even to call in M. Bergerin, her life is in danger. If she were to die for want of proper care, you would hear of it, I am sure."

"Tut, tut, tut! you know what is the matter with her, and when once one of these doctors sets foot in your house, they will come five or six times a day."

"After all, Grandet, you will do as you think best. We are old friends; there is no one in all Saumur who has your interests more at heart than I, so it was only my duty to let you know this. Whatever happens, you are responsible, and you understand your own business, so there it is. Besides, that was not what I came to speak about. There is something else more serious for you, perhaps; for, after all, you do not wish to kill your wife, she is too useful to you. Just think what your position would be if anything happened to Mme. Grandet; you would have your daughter to face. You would have to give an account to Eugénie of her mother's share of your joint estate; and if she chose, your daughter might demand her mother's fortune, for she, and not you, will succeed to it; and in that case, you might have to sell Froidfond."

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Cruchot's words were like a bolt from the blue; for much as the worthy cooper knew about business, he knew very little law. The idea of a forced sale had never occurred to him.

"So I should strongly recommend you to treat her kindly," the notary concluded.

"But do you know what she has done, Cruchot?"

"No. What was it?" asked the notary; he felt curious to know the reason of the quarrel, and a confidence from old Grandet was an interesting novelty.

"She has given away her gold."

"Oh! well, it belonged to her, didn't it?"

"That is what they all say!" said the goodman, letting his arms fall with a tragic gesture.

"And for a trifle like that you would not shut yourself out from all hope of any concessions which you will want her to make if her mother dies?"

"Ah! do you call six thousand francs in gold a trifle?"

"Eh! my old friend, have you any idea what it will cost you to have your property valued and divided if Eugénie should compel you to do so?"

"What would it cost?"

"Two, three, or even four thousand francs. How could you know what it is worth unless you put it up to public auction? While if you come to an understanding——"

"By my father's pruning-hook!" cried the vinegrower, sinking back, and turning quite pale. "We will see about this, Cruchot."

After a moment of agony or of dumb bewilderment, the worthy man spoke, with his eyes fixed on his neighbor's face. "Life is very hard!" he said. "It is full of troubles. Cruchot," he went on, earnestly, "you are incapable of deceiving me; give me your word of honor that this ditty of yours has a solid foundation. Let me look at the Code; I want to see the Code!"

"My poor friend," said the notary, "I ought to understand my own profession."

"Then it is really true? I shall be plundered, cheated, robbed, and murdered by my own daughter!"

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"She is her mother's heiress."

"Then what is the good of having children? Oh! my wife, I love my wife; luckily she has a sound constitution; she is a La Bertellière."

"She has not a month to live."

The cooper struck his forehead, took a few paces, and then came back again.

"What is to be done?" he demanded of Cruchot, with a tragic expression on his face.

"Well, perhaps Eugénie might simply give up her claims to her mother's property. You do not mean to disinherit her, do you? But do not treat her harshly if you want her to make a concession of that kind. I am speaking against my own interests, my friend. How do I make a living but by drawing up inventories and conveyances and deeds of arrangement and by winding up estates?"

"We shall see, we shall see. Let us say no more about this now, Cruchot. You have wrung my very soul. Have you taken any gold lately?"

"No; but I have some old louis, nine or ten perhaps, which you can have. Look here, my good friend, make it up with Eugénie; all Saumur is pointing a finger at you."

"The rogues!"

"Well, consols have risen to ninety-nine, so you should be satisfied for once in your life."

"At ninety-nine, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Hey! hey! ninety-nine!" the old man said, as he went with the notary to the street door. He felt too much agitated by what he had just heard to stay quietly at home; so he went up to his wife's room.

"Come, mother, you may spend the day with your daughter, I am going to Froidfond. Be good, both of you, while I am away. This is our wedding day, dear wife.—Stay! here are ten crowns for you, for the Fête-Dieu procession; you have wanted to give it for long enough. Take a holiday! have some fun, keep up your spirits and get well. *Vive la joie!*"

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He threw down ten crowns of six francs each upon the bed, took her face in his hands, and kissed her on the forehead.

"You are feeling better, dear wife, are you not?"

"But how can you think of receiving God, who forgives, into your house, when you have shut your heart against your daughter?" she said, with deep feeling in her voice.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said the father soothingly; "we will see about that."

"Merciful heaven! Eugénie!" called her mother, her face flushed with joy; "Eugénie, come and give your father a kiss, you are forgiven!" But her worthy father had vanished. He fled with all his might in the direction of his vineyards, where he set himself to the task of constructing his new world out of this chaos of strange ideas.

Grandet had just entered upon his sixty-seventh year. Avarice had gained a stronger hold upon him during the past two years of his life; indeed, all lasting passions grow with man's growth; and it had come to pass with him, as with all men whose lives are ruled by one master-idea, that he clung with all the force of his imagination to the symbol which represented that idea for him. Gold—to have gold, that he might see and touch it, had become with him a perfect monomania. His disposition to tyrannize had also grown with his love of money, and it seemed to him to be *monstrous* that he should be called upon to give up the least portion of his property on the death of his wife. Was he to render an account of her fortune, and to have an inventory drawn up of everything he possessed—personalty and real estate, and put it all up to auction?

"That would be stark ruin," he said aloud to himself, as he stood among his vines and examined their stems.

He made up his mind at last, and came back to Saumur at dinner time fully determined on his course. He would humor Eugénie, and coax and cajole her so that he might die royally, keeping the control of his millions in his hands until his latest sigh. It happened that he let himself in with his master key; he crept noiselessly as a wolf up the stairs to

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his wife's room, which he entered just as Eugénie was setting the dressing-case, in all its golden glory, upon her mother's bed. The two women had stolen a pleasure in Grandet's absence; they were looking at the portraits and tracing out Charles' features in his mother's likeness.

"It is just his forehead and his mouth!" Eugénie was saying, as the vinegrower opened the door.

Mme. Grandet saw how her husband's eyes darted upon the gold. "Oh! God have pity upon us!" she cried.

The vinegrower seized upon the dressing-case as a tiger might spring upon a sleeping child.

"What may this be?" he said, carrying off the treasure to the window, where he ensconced himself with it. "Gold! solid gold!" he cried, "and plenty of it too; there is a couple of pounds' weight here. Aha! so this was what Charles gave you in exchange for your pretty gold pieces! Why did you not tell me? It was a good stroke of business, little girl. You are your father's own daughter, I see. (Eugénie trembled from head to foot.) This belongs to Charles, doesn't it?" the goodman went on.

"Yes, father; it is not mine. That case is a sacred trust."

"Tut, tut, tut! he has gone off with your money; you ought to make good the loss of your little treasure."

"Oh! father! . . ."

The old man had taken out his pocket-knife, with a view to wrenching away a plate of the precious metal, and for the moment had been obliged to lay the case on a chair beside him. Eugénie sprang forward to secure her treasure; but the cooper, who had kept an eye upon his daughter as well as upon the casket, put out his arm to prevent this, and thrust her back so roughly that she fell on to the bed.

"Sir! sir!" cried the mother, rising and sitting upright.

Grandet had drawn out his knife, and was about to insert the blade beneath the plate.

"Father!" cried Eugénie, going down on her knees and dragging herself nearer to him as she knelt; "father, in the name of all the saints, and the Holy Virgin, for the sake of

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Christ who died on the cross, for your own soul's salvation, father, if you have any regard for my life, do not touch it! The case is not yours, and it is not mine. It belongs to an unhappy kinsman, who gave it into my keeping, and I ought to give it back to him untouched."

"What do you look at it for if it is a deposit? Looking at it is worse than touching it."

"Do not pull it to pieces, father! You will bring dishonor upon me. Father! do you hear me?"

"For pity's sake, sir!" entreated the mother.

"Father!"

The shrill cry rang through the house and brought the frightened Nanon upstairs. Eugénie caught up a knife that lay within her reach.

"Well?" said Grandet, calmly, with a cold smile on his lips.

"Sir! you are killing me!" said the mother.

"Father, if you cut away a single scrap of gold, I shall stab myself with this knife. It is your doing that my mother is dying, and now my death will also be laid at your door. It shall be wound for wound."

Grandet held his knife suspended above the case, looked at his daughter, and hesitated.

"Would you really do it, Eugénie?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" said the mother.

"She would do as she says," cried Nanon. "Do be sensible, sir, for once in your life."

The cooper wavered for a moment, looking first at the gold, and then at his daughter.

Mme. Grandet fainted.

"There! sir, you see, the mistress is dying," cried Nanon.

"There! there! child, do not let us fall out about a box. Just take it back!" cried the cooper hastily, throwing the case on to the bed. "And, Nanon, go for M. Bergerin. Come! come! mother," he said, and he kissed his wife's hand; "never mind, there! there! we have made it up, haven't we, little girl? No more dry bread; you shall eat whatever you

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like . . . Ah! she is opening her eyes. Well, now, little mother, dear little mother, don't take on so! Look! I am going to kiss Eugénie! She loves her cousin, does she? She shall marry him if she likes; she shall keep his little case for him. But you must live for a long while yet, my poor wife! Come! turn your head a little. Listen! you shall have the finest altar at the Fête-Dieu that has ever been seen in Saumur."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* how can you treat your wife and daughter in this way!" moaned Mme. Grandet.

"I will never do so again, never again!" cried the cooper. "You shall see, my poor wife."

He went to his strong room and returned with a handful of louis d'or, which he scattered on the coverlet.

"There! Eugénie, there! wife, those are for you," he said, fingering the gold coins as they lay. "Come! cheer up, and get well, you shall want for nothing, neither you nor Eugénie. There are a hundred louis for her. You will not give them away, will you, eh, Eugénie?"

Mme. Grandet and her daughter gazed at each other in amazement.

"Take back the money, father; we want nothing, nothing but your love."

"Oh! well, just as you like," he said, as he pocketed the louis, "let us live together like good friends. Let us all go down to the dining-room and have dinner, and play loto every evening, and put our two sous into the pool, and be as merry as the maids. Eh! my wife?"

"Alas! how I wish that I could, if you would like it," said the dying woman, "but I am not strong enough to get up."

"Poor mother!" said the cooper, "you do not know how much I love you; and you too, child!"

He drew his daughter to him and embraced her with fervor.

"Oh! how pleasant it is to kiss one's daughter after a squabble, my little girl! There! mother, do you see? We are quite at one again now. Just go and lock that away," he said

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to Eugénie, as he pointed to the case. "There! there! don't be frightened; I will never say another word to you about it."

M. Bergerin, who was regarded as the cleverest doctor in Saumur, came before very long. He told Grandet plainly after the interview that the patient was very seriously ill; that any excitement might be fatal to her; that with a light diet, perfect tranquillity, and the most constant care, her life might possibly be prolonged until the end of the autumn.

"Will it be an expensive illness?" asked the worthy householder. "Will she want a lot of physic?"

"Not much physic, but very careful nursing," answered the doctor, who could not help smiling.

"After all, M. Bergerin, you are a man of honor," said Grandet uneasily. "I can depend upon you, can I not? Come and see my wife whenever, and as often as you think it really necessary. Preserve her life. My good wife—I am very fond of her, you see, though I may not show it; it is all shut up inside me, and I am one that takes things terribly to heart; I am in trouble too. It all began with my brother's death; I am spending, oh!—heaps of money in Paris for him, —the very eyes out of my head in fact, and it seems as if there were no end to it. Good day, sir. If you can save my wife, save her, even if it takes a hundred, or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent wishes that his wife might be restored to health, for this question of the inheritance was like a foretaste of death for him; in spite of his readiness to fulfil the least wishes of the astonished mother and daughter in every possible way; in spite of Eugénie's tenderest and most devoted care, it was evident that Mme. Grandet's life was rapidly drawing to a close. Day by day she grew weaker, and, as often happens at her time of life, she had no strength to resist the disease that was wasting her away. She seemed to have no more vitality than the autumn leaves; and as the sunlight shining through the leaves turns them to gold, so she seemed to be transformed by the light of heaven. Her death was a fitting close to her life, a death wholly Christian;

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is not that saying that it was sublime? Her love for her daughter, her meek virtues, her angelic patience, had never shone more brightly than in that month of October, 1822, when she passed away. All through her illness she had never uttered the slightest complaint, and her spotless soul left earth for heaven with but one regret—for the daughter whose sweet companionship had been the solace of her dreary life, and for whom her dying eyes foresaw troubles and sorrows manifold. She trembled at the thought of this lamb, spotless as she herself was, left alone in the world among selfish beings who sought to despoil her of her fleece, her treasure.

"There is no happiness save in heaven," she said just before she died; "you will know that one day, my child."

On the morrow after her mother's death, it seemed to Eugénie that she had yet one more reason for clinging fondly to the old house where she had been born, and where she had found life so hard of late—it became for her the place where her mother had died. She could not see the old chair set on little blocks of wood, the place by the window where her mother used to sit, without shedding tears. Her father showed her such tenderness, and took such care of her, that she began to think that she had never understood his nature; he used to come to her room and take her down to breakfast on his arm, and sit looking at her for whole hours with something almost like kindness in his eyes, with the same brooding look that he gave his gold. Indeed, the old cooper almost trembled before his daughter, and was altogether so unlike himself, that Nanon and the Cruchotins wondered at these signs of weakness, and set it down to his advanced age; they began to fear that the old man's mind was giving way. But when the day came on which the family began to wear their mourning, M. Cruchot, who alone was in his client's confidence, was invited to dinner, and these mysteries were explained. Grandet waited till the table had been cleared, and the doors carefully shut.

Then he began. "My dear child, you are your mother's heiress, and there are some little matters of business that we must settle between us. Is not that so, eh, Cruchot?"

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"Yes."

"Is it really pressing; must it be settled to-day, father?"

"Yes, yes, little girl. I could not endure this suspense any longer, and I am sure that you would not make things hard for me."

"Oh! father——"

"Well, then, everything must be decided to-night."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Why, little girl, it is not for me to tell you. You tell her, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle, your father wants neither to divide nor to sell his property, nor to pay a heavy succession duty upon the ready money he may happen to have just now. So if these complications are to be avoided, there must be no inventory made out, and all the property must remain undivided for the present——"

"Cruchot, are you quite sure of what you are saying that you talk in this way before a child?"

"Let me say what I have to say, Grandet."

"Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter would plunder me. You would not plunder me, would you, little girl?"

"But what am I to do, M. Cruchot?" asked Eugénie, losing patience.

"Well," said the notary, "you must sign this deed, by which you renounce your claims to your mother's property; the property would be secured to you, but your father would have the use of it for his life, and there would be no need to make a division now."

"I understand nothing of all this that you are saying," Eugénie answered; "give me the deed, and show me where I am to sign my name."

Grandet looked from the document to his daughter, and again from his daughter to the document. His agitation was so great that he actually wiped several drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"I would much rather you simply waived all claim to your

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poor dear mother's property, little girl," he broke in, "instead of signing that deed. It will cost a lot to register it. I would rather you renounced your claims and trusted to me for the future. I would allow you a good round sum, say a hundred francs every month. You could pay for masses then, you see; you could have masses said for any one that . . . Eh? A hundred francs (in livres) every month?"

"I will do just as you like, father."

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, "it is my duty to point out to you that you are robbing yourself without guarantee——"

"Eh! mon Dieu!" she answered. "What does that matter to me?"

"Do be quiet, Cruchot. So it is settled, quite settled!" cried Grandet, taking his daughter's hand and striking his own into it. "You will not go back from your word, Eugénie? You are a good girl, hein!"

"Oh! father——"

In his joy he embraced his daughter, almost suffocating her as he did so.

"There! child, you have given fresh life to your father; but you are only giving him what he gave you, so we are quits. This is how business ought to be conducted, and life is a business transaction. Bless you! You are a good girl, and one that really loves her old father. You can do as you like now. Then good-bye till to-morrow, Cruchot," he added, turning to the horrified notary. "You will see that the deed of renunciation is properly drawn up for the clerk of the court."

By noon next day the declaration was drawn up, and Eugénie herself signed away all her rights to her heritage. Yet a year slipped by, and the cooper had not kept his promise, and Eugénie had not received a sou of the monthly income which was to have been hers; when Eugénie spoke to him about it, half laughingly, he could not help blushing; he hurried up to his room, and when he came down again he handed her about a third of the jewelry which he had purchased of his nephew.

"There! child," he said, with a certain sarcastic ring in his

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voice; "will you take these for your twelve hundred francs?"

"Oh! father, really? Will you really give them to me?"

"You shall have as much next year again," said he, flinging it into her lap; "and so, before very long, you will have all his trinkets," he added, rubbing his hands. He had made a very good bargain, thanks to his daughter's sentiment about the jewelry, and was in high good humor.

Yet, although the old man was still hale and vigorous, he began to see that he must take his daughter into his confidence, and that she must learn to manage his concerns. So with this end in view he required her to be present while he gave out the daily stores, and for two years he made her receive the portion of the rent which was paid in kind. Gradually she came to know the names of the vineyards and farms; he took her with him when he visited his tenants. By the end of the third year he considered the initiation was complete; and, in truth, she had fallen into his ways unquestioningly, till it had become a matter of habit with her to do as her father had done before her. He had no further doubts, gave over the keys of the storeroom into her keeping, and installed her as mistress of the house.

Five years went by in this way, and no event disturbed their monotonous existence. Eugénie and her father lived a life of methodical routine with the same regularity of movement that characterized the old clock; doing the same things at the same hour day after day, year after year. Every one knew that there had been a profound sorrow in Mlle. Grandet's life; every circle in Saumur had its theories of this secret trouble, and its suspicions as to the state of the heiress' heart, but she never let fall a word that could enlighten any one on either point.

She saw no one but the three Cruchots and a few of their friends, who had gradually been admitted as visitors to the house. Under their instruction she had mastered the game of whist, and they dropped in nearly every evening for a rubber. In the year 1827 her father began to feel the infirmities of age, and was obliged to take her still further into his con-

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fidence; she learned the full extent of his landed possessions, and was recommended in all cases of difficulty to refer to the notary Cruchot, whose integrity could be depended upon. Grandet had reached the age of eighty-two, and towards the end of the year had a paralytic seizure, from which he never rallied. M. Bergerin gave him up, and Eugénie realized that very shortly she would be quite alone in the world; the thought drew her more closely to her father; she clung to this last link of affection that bound her to another soul. Love was all the world for her, as it is for all women who love; and Charles had gone out of her world. She nursed her father with sublime devotion; the old man's intellect had grown feeble, but the greed of gold had become an instinct which survived his faculties.

Grandet died as he had lived. Every morning during that slow death he had himself wheeled across his room to a place beside the fire, whence he could keep the door of his cabinet in view; on the other side of the door, no doubt lay his hoarded treasures of gold. He sat there, passive and motionless; but if any one entered the room, he would glance uneasily at the new-comer, and then at the door with its sheathing of iron plates. He would ask the meaning of every sound, however faint, and, to the notary's amazement, the old man heard the dog bark in the yard at the back of the house. He roused from this apparent stupor at the proper hour on the days for receiving his rents and dues, for settling accounts with his vine-dressers, and giving receipts. Then he shifted his armchair round on its casters, until he faced the door of his cabinet, and his daughter was called upon to open it, and to put away the little bags of money in neat piles, one upon the other. He would watch her until it was all over and the door was locked again; and as soon as she had returned the precious key to him, he would turn round noiselessly and take up his old position, putting the key in his waistcoat pocket, where he felt for it from time to time.

His old friend the notary felt sure that it was only a question of time, and that Eugénie must of necessity marry his

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nephew the magistrate, unless, indeed, Charles Grandet returned; so he redoubled his attentions. He came every day to take Grandet's instructions, went at his bidding to Froidfond, to farm and meadow and vineyard; sold vintages, and exchanged all moneys received for gold, which was secretly sent to join the piles of bags stored up in the cabinet.

Then death came up close at last, and the vinegrower's strong frame wrestled with the Destroyer. Even in those days he would sit as usual by the fire, facing the door of his cabinet. He used to drag off the blankets that they wrapped round him, and try to fold them, and say to Nanon, "Lock that up; lock that up, or they will rob me."

So long as he could open his eyes, where the last sparks of life seemed to linger, they used to turn at once to the door of the room where all his treasures lay, and he would say to his daughter, in tones that seemed to thrill with a panic of fear—

"Are they there still?"

"Yes, father."

"Keep watch over the gold! . . . Let me see the gold."

Then Eugénie used to spread out the louis on a table before him, and he would sit for whole hours with his eyes fixed on the louis in an unseeing stare, like that of a child who begins to see for the first time; and sometimes a weak infantine smile, painful to see, would steal across his features.

"That warms me!" he muttered more than once, and his face expressed a perfect content.

When the curé came to administer the sacrament, all the life seemed to have died out of the miser's eyes, but they lit up for the first time for many hours at the sight of the silver crucifix, the candlesticks, and holy water vessel, all of silver; he fixed his gaze on the precious metal, and the wen twitched for the last time.

As the priest held the gilded crucifix above him that the image of Christ might be laid to his lips, he made a frightful effort to clutch it—a last effort which cost him his life. He called to Eugénie, who saw nothing; she was kneeling beside him, bathing in tears the hand that was growing cold already.

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"Give me your blessing, father," she entreated. "Be very careful!" the last words came from him; "one day you will render an account to me of everything here below." Which utterance clearly shows that a miser should adopt Christianity as his religion.

So Eugénie Grandet was alone in the world, and her house was left to her desolate. There was no one but Nanon with whom she could talk over her troubles; she could look into no other eyes and find a response in them; big Nanon was the only human being who loved her for herself. For Eugénie, Nanon was a providence; she was no longer a servant, she was a humble friend.

M. Cruchot informed Eugénie that she had three hundred thousand livres a year, derived from landed property in and around Saumur, besides six millions in the three per cents (invested when the funds were at sixty francs, whereas they now stood at seventy-seven), and in ready money two millions in gold, and a hundred thousand francs in silver, without counting any arrears that were due. Altogether her property amounted to about seventeen million francs.

"Where can my cousin be?" she said to herself.

On the day when M. Cruchot laid these facts before his new client, together with the information that the estate was now clear and free from all outstanding liabilities, Eugénie and Nanon sat on either side of the hearth, in the parlor, now so empty and so full of memories; everything recalled past days, from her mother's chair set on its wooden blocks to the glass tumbler out of which her cousin once drank.

"Nanon, we are alone, you and I."

"Yes, mam'selle; if I only knew where he was, the charming young gentleman, I would set off on foot to find him."

"The sea lies between us," said Eugénie.

While the poor lonely heiress, with her faithful old servant for company, was shedding tears in the cold, dark house, which was all the world she knew, men talked from Orleans

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to Nantes of nothing but Mlle. Grandet and her seventeen millions. One of her first acts was to settle a pension of twelve hundred francs on Nanon, who, possessing already an income of six hundred francs of her own, at once became a great match. In less than a month she exchanged her condition of spinster for that of wife, at the instance and through the persuasion of Antoine Cornoiller, who was promoted to the position of bailiff and keeper to Mlle. Grandet. Mme. Cornoiller had an immense advantage over her contemporaries; her large features had stood the test of time better than those of many a comelier woman. She might be fifty-nine years of age, but she did not look more than forty; thanks to an almost monastic regimen, she possessed rude health and a high color, time seemed to have no effect on her, and perhaps she had never looked so well in her life as she did on her wedding day. She had the compensating qualities of her style of ugliness; she was tall, stout, and strong; her face wore an indestructible expression of good humor, and Cornoiller's lot seemed an enviable lot to many beholders.

"Fast color," said the draper.

"She might have a family yet," said the drysalter; "she is as well preserved as if she had been kept in brine, asking your pardon."

"She is rich; that fellow Cornoiller has done a good day's work," said another neighbor.

When Nanon left the old house and went down the crooked street on her way to the parish church, she met with nothing but congratulations and good wishes. Nanon was very popular with her neighbors. Eugénie gave her three dozen spoons and forks as a wedding present. Cornoiller, quite overcome with such munificence, spoke of his mistress with tears in his eyes; he would have let himself be cut in pieces for her. Mme. Cornoiller became Eugénie's confidential servant; she was not only married, and had a husband of her own, her dignity was yet further increased, her happiness was doubled. *She* had at last a storeroom and a bunch of keys; *she* too gave out provisions just as her late master used to do. Then she had

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two subordinates—a cook and a waiting-woman, who took charge of the house linen and made Mlle. Grandet's dresses. As for Cornoiller, he combined the functions of forester and steward. It is needless to say that the cook and the waiting-woman of Nanon's choosing were real domestic *treasures*. The tenants scarcely noticed the death of their late landlord; they were thoroughly broken in to a severe discipline, and M. and Mme. Cornoiller's reign was no whit less rigorous than that of the old régime.

Eugénie was a woman of thirty, and as yet had known none of the happiness of life. All through her joyless, monotonous childhood she had had but one companion, the broken-spirited mother, whose sensitive nature had found little but suffering in a hard life. That mother had joyfully taken leave of existence, pitying the daughter, who must still live on in the world. Eugénie would never lose the sense of her loss, but little of the bitterness of self-reproach mingled with her memories of her mother.

Love, her first and only love, had been a fresh source of suffering for Eugénie. For a few brief days she had seen her lover; she had given her heart to him between two stolen kisses; then he had left her and had set the lands and seas of the world between them. Her father had cursed her for this love; it had nearly cost her her mother's life; it had brought her pain and sorrow and a few faint hopes. She had striven towards her happiness till her own forces had failed her, and another had not come to her aid.

Our souls live by giving and receiving; we have need of another soul; whatever it gives us we make our own, and give back again in overflowing measure. This is as vitally necessary for our inner life as breathing is for our corporeal existence. Without that wonderful physical process we perish; the heart suffers from lack of air, and ceases to beat. Eugénie was beginning to suffer.

She found no solace in her wealth; it could do nothing for her; her love, her religion, her faith in the future made up all her life. Love was teaching her what eternity meant.

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Her own heart and the Gospel each spoke to her of a life to come; life was everlasting, and love no less eternal. Night and day she dwelt with these two infinite thoughts, perhaps for her they were but one. She withdrew more and more into herself; she loved, and believed that she was loved.

For seven years her passion had wholly engrossed her.

Her treasures were not those millions left to her by her father, the money that went on accumulating year after year; but the two portraits which hung above her bed, Charles' leather case, the jewels which she had bought back from her father, and which were now proudly set forth on a layer of cotton wool inside the drawer in the old chest, and her aunt's thimble which Mme. Grandet had used; every day Eugénie took up a piece of embroidery, a sort of Penelope's web, which she had only begun that she might wear the golden thimble, endeared to her by so many memories.

It seemed hardly probable that Mlle. Grandet would marry while she was still in mourning. Her sincere piety was well known. So the Cruchot family, counselled by the astute old Abbé, was fain to be content with surrounding the heiress with the most affectionate attentions. Her dining-room was filled every evening with the warmest and most devoted Cruchotins, who endeavored to surpass each other in singing the praises of the mistress of the house in every key. She had her physician-in-ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her mistress of the robes, her prime minister, and last, but by no means least, her chancellor—a chancellor whose aim it was to keep her informed of everything. If the heiress had expressed any wish for a train-bearer, they would have found one for her. She was a queen in fact, and never was queen so adroitly flattered. A great soul never stoops to flattery; it is the resource of little natures, who succeed in making themselves smaller still, that they may the better creep into the hearts of those about whom they circle. Flattery, by its very nature, implies an interested motive. So the people who filled Mlle. Grandet's sitting-room every evening (they addressed her and spoke of her among

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themselves as Mlle. de Froidfond now) heaped their praises upon their hostess in a manner truly marvelous. This chorus of praise embarrassed Eugénie at first; but however gross the flattery might be, she became accustomed to hear her beauty extolled, and if some new-comer had considered her to be plain, she certainly would have winced more under the criticism than she might have done eight years ago. She came at last to welcome their homage, which in her secret heart she laid at the feet of her idol. So also, by degrees, she accepted the position, and allowed herself to be treated as a queen, and saw her little court full every evening.

M. le Président de Bonfons was the hero of the circle; they lauded his talents, his personal appearance, his learning, his amiability; he was an inexhaustible subject of admiring comment. Such an one would call attention to the fact that in seven years the magistrate had largely increased his fortune; Bonfons had at least ten thousand francs a year; and his property, like the lands of all the Cruchots in fact, lay within the compass of the heiress' vast estates.

"Do you know, mademoiselle," another courtier would remark, "that the Cruchots have forty thousand livres a year among them!"

"And they are putting money by," said Mlle. de Gribeaucourt, an old and trusty Cruchotine. "Quite lately a gentleman came from Paris on purpose to offer M. Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his professional connection. If he could gain an appointment as justice of the peace, he ought to take the offer."

"He means to succeed M. de Bonfons as President, and is taking steps to that end," said Mme. d'Orsonval, "for M. le Président will be Councillor, and then a President of a Court; he is so gifted that he is sure to succeed."

"Yes," said another, "he is a very remarkable man. Do you not think so, mademoiselle?"

M. le Président had striven to act up to the part he wanted to play. He was forty years old, his countenance was dark and ill-favored, he had, moreover, the wizened look which is

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frequently seen in men of his profession; but he affected the airs of youth, sported a malacca cane, refrained from taking snuff in Mlle. Grandet's house, and went thither arrayed in a white cravat and a shirt with huge frills, which gave him a quaint family resemblance to a turkey-gobbler. He called the fair heiress "our dear Eugénie," and spoke as if he were an intimate friend of the family. In fact, but for the number of those assembled, and the substitution of whist for loto, and the absence of M. and Mme. Grandet, the scene was scarcely changed; it might almost have been that first evening on which this story began.

The pack was still in pursuit of Eugénie's millions; it was a more numerous pack now; they gave tongue together, and hunted down their prey more systematically.

If Charles had come back from the far-off Indies, he would have found the same motives at work and almost the same people. Mme. des Grassins, for whom Eugénie had nothing but kindness and pity, still remained to vex the Cruchots. Eugénie's face still shone out against the dark background, and Charles (though invisible) reigned there supreme as in other days.

Yet some advance had been made. Eugénie's birthday bouquet was never forgotten by the magistrate. Indeed, it had become an institution; every evening he brought the heiress a huge and wonderful bouquet. Mme. Cornoiller ostentatiously placed these offerings in a vase, and promptly flung them into a corner of the yard as soon as the visitors had departed.

In the early spring Mme. des Grassins made a move, and sought to trouble the felicity of the Cruchotins by talking to Eugénie of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ruined fortunes might be retrieved if the heiress would return his estate to him by a marriage contract. Mme. des Grassins lauded the Marquis and his title to the skies; and, taking Eugénie's quiet smile for consent, she went about saying that M. le Président Cruchot's marriage was not such a settled thing as *some* people imagined.

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"M. de Froidfond may be fifty years old," she said, "but he looks no older than M. Cruchot; he is a widower, and has a family, it is true; but he is a marquis, he will be a peer of France one of these days, it is not such a bad match as times go. I know of my own certain knowledge that when old Grandet added his own property to the Froidfond estate he meant to graft his family into the Froidfonds. He often told me as much. Oh! he was a shrewd old man, was Grandet."

"Ah! Nanon," Eugénie said one evening, as she went to bed, "why has he not once written to me in seven years?" . .

While these events were taking place in Saumur, Charles was making his fortune in the East. His first venture was very successful. He had promptly realized the sum of six thousand dollars. Crossing the line had cured him of many early prejudices; he soon saw very clearly that the best and quickest way of making money was the same in the tropics as in Europe—by buying and selling men. He made a descent on the African coasts and bargained for negroes and other goods in demand in various markets. He threw himself heart and soul into the business, and thought of nothing else. He set one clear aim before him, to reappear in Paris, and to dazzle the world there with his wealth, to attain a position even higher than the one from which he had fallen.

By dint of rubbing shoulders with many men, traveling in many lands, coming in contact with various customs and religions, his code had been relaxed, and he had grown sceptical. His notions of right and wrong became less rigid when he found that what was looked upon as a crime in one country was held up to admiration in another. He saw that every one was working for himself, that disinterestedness was rarely to be met with, and grew selfish and suspicious; the hereditary failings of the Grandets came out in him—the hardness, the shiftiness, and the greed of gain. He sold Chinese coolies, negro slaves, swallow-nests, children, artists, anything and everything that brought in money. He became a money lender on a large scale. Long practice in cheating the cus-

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toms authorities had made him unscrupulous in other ways. He would make the voyage to St. Thomas, buy booty of the pirates there for a low price, and sell the merchandise in the dearest market.

During his first voyage Eugénie's pure and noble face had been with him, like the image of the Virgin which Spanish sailors set on the prows of their vessels; he had attributed his first success to a kind of magical efficacy possessed by her prayers and vows; but as time went on, the women of other countries, negresses, mulattoes, white skins, and yellow skins, orgies and adventures in many lands, completely effaced all recollection of his cousin, of Saumur, of the old house, of the bench, and of the kiss that he had snatched in the passage. He remembered nothing but the little garden shut in by its crumbling walls where he had learned the fate that lay in store for him; but he rejected all connection with the family. His uncle was an old fox who had filched his jewels. Eugénie had no place in his heart; he never gave her a thought; but she occupied a page in his ledger as a creditor for six thousand francs.

Such conduct and such ideas explained Charles Grandet's silence. In the East Indies, at St. Thomas, on the coast of Africa, at Lisbon, in the United States, Charles Grandet the adventurer was known as Carl Sepherd, a pseudonym which he assumed so as not to compromise his real name. Carl Sepherd could be indefatigable, brazen, and greedy of gain; could conduct himself, in short, like a man who resolves to make a fortune *quibuscumque viis,* and makes haste to have done with villainy as soon as possible, in order to live respected for the rest of his days.

With such methods his career of prosperity was rapid and brilliant, and in 1827 he returned to Bordeaux on board the Marie Caroline, a fine brig belonging to a Royalist firm. He had nineteen hundred thousand francs with him in gold dust, carefully secreted in three strong casks; he hoped to sell it to the Paris mint, and to make eight per cent on the transaction. There was also on board the brig a gentleman-in-ordi-

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nary to his Majesty Charles X., a M. d'Aubrion, a worthy old man who had been rash enough to marry a woman of fashion whose money came from estates in the West India Islands. Mme. d'Aubrion's reckless extravagance had obliged him to go out to the Indies to sell her property. M. and Mme. d'Aubrion, of the house of d'Aubrion de Buch, which had lost its *captal* or chieftain just before the Revolution, were now in straitened circumstances. They had a bare twenty thousand francs of income and a daughter, a very plain girl, whom her mother made up her mind to marry without a dowry; for life in Paris is expensive, and, as has been seen, their means were reduced. It was an enterprise the success of which might have seemed somewhat problematical to a man of the world, in spite of the cleverness with which a woman of fashion is generally credited. Perhaps even Mme. d'Aubrion herself, when she looked at her daughter, was almost ready to despair of getting rid of her to any one, even to the most besotted worshiper of rank and titles.

Mlle. d'Aubrion was a tall, spare demoiselle, somewhat like her namesake the insect; she had a disdainful mouth, overshadowed by a long nose, thick at the tip, sallow in its normal condition, but very red after a meal, an organic change which was all the more unpleasant by reason of contrast with a pallid, insipid countenance. From some points of view she was all that a worldly mother, who was thirty-eight years of age, and had still some pretensions to beauty, could desire. But by way of compensating advantages, the Marquise d'Aubrion's distinguished air had been inherited by her daughter, and that young lady had been submitted to a Spartan regimen, which for the time being subdued the offending hue in her feature to a reasonable flesh-tint. Her mother had taught her how to dress herself. Under the same instructor she had acquired a charming manner, and had learned to assume that pensive expression which interests a man and leads him to imagine that here, surely, is the angel for whom he has hitherto sought in vain. She was carefully drilled in a certain manœuvre with her foot—to let it peep forth from be-

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neath her petticoat, and so call attention to its small size—whenever her nose became unseasonably red; indeed, the mother had made the very best of her daughter. By means of large sleeves, stiff skirts, puffs, padding, and high pressure corsets, she had produced a highly curious and interesting result, a specimen of femininity which ought to have been put into a museum for the edification of mothers generally.

Charles became very intimate with Mme. d'Aubrion; the lady had her own reasons for encouraging him. People said that during the time on board she left no stone unturned to secure such a prize for a son-in-law. It is at any rate certain that when they landed at Bordeaux Charles stayed in the same hotel with M., Mme., and Mlle. d'Aubrion, and they all traveled together to Paris. The hôtel d'Aubrion was hampered with mortgages, and Charles was intended to come to the rescue. The mother had gone so far as to say that it would give her great pleasure to establish a son-in-law on the ground floor. She did not share M. d'Aubrion's aristocratic prejudices, and promised Charles Grandet to obtain letters patent from that easy-tempered monarch, Charles X., which should authorize him, Grandet, to bear the name and assume the arms of the d'Aubrions, and (by purchasing the entail) to succeed to the property of Aubrion, which was worth about thirty-six thousand livres a year, to say nothing of the titles of Captal de Buch and Marquis d'Aubrion. They could be very useful to each other, in short; and what with this arrangement of a joint establishment, and one or two posts about the court, the hôtel d'Aubrion might count upon an income of a hundred thousand francs and more.

"And when a man has a hundred thousand francs a year, a name, a family, and a position at Court—for I shall procure an appointment for you as gentleman of the bedchamber—the rest is easy. You can be anything you choose" (so she instructed Charles), "Master of Requests in the Council of State, Prefect, Secretary to an Embassy, the Ambassador himself if you like. Charles X. is much attached to d'Aubrion; they have known each other from childhood."

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She fairly turned his head with these ambitious schemes, and during the voyage Charles began to cherish the hopes and ideas which had been so cleverly insinuated in the form of tender confidences. He never doubted but that his uncle had paid his father's creditors; he had been suddenly launched into the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, at that time the goal of social ambition; and beneath the shadow of Mlle. Mathilde's purple nose, he was shortly to appear as the Comte d'Aubrion, very much as the Dreux shone forth transformed into Brézés. He was dazzled by the apparent prosperity of the restored dynasty, which had seemed to be tottering to its fall when he left France; his head was full of wild, ambitious dreams, which began on the voyage, and did not leave him in Paris. He resolved to strain every nerve to reach those pinnacles of glory which his egotistical would-be mother-in-law had pointed out to him. His cousin was only a dim speck in the remote past; she had no place in this brilliant future, no part in his dreams, but he went to see Annette. That experienced woman of the world gave counsel to her old friend; he must by no means let slip such an opportunity for an alliance; she promised to aid him in all his schemes of advancement. In her heart she was delighted to see Charles thus secured to such a plain and uninteresting girl. He had grown very attractive during his stay in the Indies; his complexion had grown darker, he had gained in manliness and self-possession; he spoke in the firm, decided tones of a man who is used to command and to success. Ever since Charles Grandet had discovered that there was a definite part for him to play in Paris, he was himself at once.

Des Grassins, hearing of his return, his approaching marriage, and his large fortune, came to see him, and spoke of the three hundred thousand francs still owing to his father's creditors. He found Charles closeted with a goldsmith, from whom he had ordered jewels for Mlle. d'Aubrion's *corbeille,* and who was submitting designs. Charles himself had brought magnificent diamonds from the Indies; but the cost of setting them, together with the silver plate and jewelry of

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the new establishment, amounted to more than two hundred thousand francs. He did not recognize des Grassins at first, and treated him with the cool insolence of a young man of fashion who is conscious that he has killed four men in as many duels in the Indies. As M. des Grassins had already called three or four times, Charles vouchsafed to hear him, but it was with bare politeness, and he did not pay the slightest attention to what the banker said.

"My father's debts are not mine," he said coolly. "I am obliged to you, sir, for the trouble you have been good enough to take, but I am none the better for it that I can see. I have not scraped together a couple of millions, earned with the sweat of my brow, to fling it to my father's creditors."

"But suppose that your father were to be declared bankrupt in a few days' time?"

"In a few days' time I shall be the Comte d'Aubrion, sir; so you can see that it is a matter of entire indifference to me. Besides, you know even better than I do that when a man has a hundred thousand livres a year, his father never has been a bankrupt," and he politely edged the deputy des Grassins to the door.

In the early days of the month of August, in that same year, Eugénie was sitting on the little bench in the garden where her cousin had sworn eternal love, and where she often took breakfast in summer mornings. The poor girl was almost happy for a few brief moments; she went over all the great and little events of her love before those catastrophes that followed. The morning was fresh and bright, and the garden was full of sunlight; her eyes wandered over the wall with its moss and flowers; it was full of cracks now, and all but in ruins, but no one was allowed to touch it, though Cornoiller was always prophesying to his wife that the whole thing would come down and crush somebody or other one of these days. The postman knocked at the door, and gave a letter into the hands of Mme. Cornoiller, who hurried into the garden, crying, "Mademoiselle! A letter! Is it *the* letter?" she added, as she handed it to her mistress.

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The words rang through Eugénie's heart as the spoken sounds rang from the ramparts and the old garden wall.

"Paris! . . . It is his writing! Then he has come back."

Eugénie's face grew white; for several seconds she kept the seal unbroken, for her heart beat so fast that she could neither move nor see. Big Nanon stood and waited with both hands on her hips; joy seemed to puff like smoke from every wrinkle in her brown face.

"Do read it, mademoiselle!"

"Oh! why does he come back by way of Paris, Nanon, when he went by way of Saumur?"

"Read it; the letter will tell you why."

Eugénie's fingers trembled as she opened the envelope; a cheque on the firm of "Mme. des Grassins et Corret, Saumur," fell out of it and fluttered down. Nanon picked it up.

"MY DEAR COUSIN . . ."

("I am not 'Eugénie' now," she thought, and her heart stood still.) "You . . ."

"He used to say *thou!*" She folded her arms and dreaded to read any further; great tears gathered in her eyes.

"What is it? Is he dead?" asked Nanon.

"If he were, he could not write," said Eugénie, and she read the letter through. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—You will, I am sure, hear with pleasure of the success of my enterprise. You brought me luck; I have come back to France a wealthy man, as my uncle advised. I have just heard of his death, together with that of my aunt, from M. des Grassins. Our parents must die in the course of nature, and we ourselves must follow them. I hope that by this time you are consoled for your loss; time cures all trouble, as I know by experience. Yes, my dear cousin, the day of illusions is gone by for me. I am sorry, but it cannot be helped. I have knocked about the world so much, and seen so much, that I have been led to reflect on life. I

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was a child when I went away; I have come back a man, and I have many things to think about now which I did not even dream of then. You are free, my cousin, and I too am free still; there is apparently nothing to hinder the realization of our youthful hopes; but I am too straightforward to hide my present situation from you. I have not for a moment forgotten that I am bound to you; through all my wanderings I have always remembered the little wooden bench——"

Eugénie started up as if she were sitting on burning coals, and sat down on one of the broken stone steps in the yard.

—"the little wooden bench where we vowed to love each other forever; the passage, the gray parlor, my attic room, the night when in your thoughtfulness and tact you made my future easier to me. Yes, these memories have been my support; I have said in my heart that you were always thinking of me when I thought of you at the hour we had agreed upon. Did you not look out into the darkness at nine o'clock? Yes, I am sure you did. I would not prove false to so sacred a friendship; I cannot deal insincerely with you.

"A marriage has been proposed to me, which is in every way satisfactory to my mind. Love in a marriage is romantic nonsense. Experience has clearly shown me that in marrying we must obey social laws and conform to conventional ideas. There is some difference of age between you and me, which would perhaps be more likely to affect your future than mine, and there are other differences of which I need not speak; your bringing up, your ways of life, and your tastes have not fitted you for Parisian life, nor would they harmonize with the future which I have marked out for myself. For instance, it is part of my plan to maintain a great household, and to see a good deal of society; and you, I am sure, from my recollections of you, would prefer a quiet, domestic life and home-keeping ways. No, I will be open with you; I will abide by your decision; but I must first, however, lay all the facts of the case before you, that you may the better judge.

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"I possess at the time of writing an income of eighty thousand livres. With this fortune I am able to marry into the d'Aubrion family; I should take their name on my marriage with their only daughter, a girl of nineteen, and secure at the same time a very brilliant position in society, and the post of gentleman-of-the-bedchamber. I will assure you at once, my dear cousin, that I have not the slightest affection for Mlle. d'Aubrion, but by this marriage I shall secure for my children a social rank which will be of inestimable value in the future. Monarchical principles are daily gaining ground. A few years hence my son, the Marquis d'Aubrion, would have an entailed estate and a yearly rental of forty thousand livres; with such advantages there would be no position to which he might not aspire. We ought to live for our children.

"You see, my cousin, how candidly I am laying the state of my heart, my hopes, and my fortunes before you. Perhaps after seven years of separation you may yourself have forgotten our childish love affair, but I have never forgotten your goodness or my promise. A less conscientious, a less upright man, with a heart less youthful than mine, might scarcely feel himself bound by it; but for me a promise, however lightly given, is sacred. When I tell you plainly that my marriage is solely a marriage of suitability, and that I have not forgotten the love of our youthful days, am I not putting myself entirely into your hands, and making you the arbitress of my fate? Is it not implied that if I must renounce my social ambitions, I shall willingly content myself with the simple and pure happiness which is always called up by the thought of you . . .

"Tra-la-la-tan-ta-ti!" sang Charles Grandet to the air of *Non più andrai,* as he signed himself,

"Your devoted cousin,

"CHARLES.

"By Jove! that is acting handsomely," he said to himself. He looked about him for the cheque, slipped it in, and added a postscript.

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"*P. S.*—I enclose a cheque on Mme. des Grassins for eight thousand francs, payable in gold to your order, comprising the capital and interest of the sum you were so kind as to advance me. I am expecting a case from Bordeaux which contains a few things which you must allow me to send you as a token of my unceasing gratitude. You can send my dressing-case by the diligence to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, Rue Hillerin-Bertin."

"By the diligence!" cried Eugénie, "when I would have given my life for it a thousand times!"

Terrible and complete shipwreck of hope; the vessel had gone down, there was not a spar, not a plank in the vast ocean. There are women who when their lover forsakes them will drag him from a rival's arms and murder her, and fly for refuge to the ends of the earth, to the scaffold, or the grave. There is a certain grandeur in this, no doubt; there is something so sublime in the passion of indignation which prompts the crime, that man's justice is awed into silence; but there are other women who suffer and bow their heads. They go on their way, submissive and broken-hearted, weeping and forgiving, praying till their last sigh for him whom they never forget. And this no less is love, love such as the angels know, love that bears itself proudly in anguish, that lives by the secret pain of which it dies at last. This was to be Eugénie's love now that she had read that horrible letter.

She raised her eyes to the sky and thought of her mother's prophetic words, uttered in the moment of clear vision that is sometimes given to dying eyes; and as she thought of her mother's life and death, it seemed to her that she was looking out over her own future. There was nothing left to her now but to live prayerfully till the day of her deliverance should come and the soul spread its wings for heaven.

"My mother was right," she said, weeping. "Suffer—and die."

She went slowly from the garden into the house, avoiding the passage; but when she came into the old gray parlor, it

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was full of memories of her cousin. On the chimney-piece there stood a certain china saucer, which she used every morning, and the old Sèvres sugar basin.

It was to be a memorable and eventful day for Eugénie. Nanon announced the curé of the parish church. He was related to the Cruchots, and therefore in the interests of the President de Bonfons. For some days past, the Abbé had urged the curé to speak seriously to Mlle. Grandet about the duty of marriage from a religious point of view for a woman in her position. Eugénie, seeing her pastor, fancied that he had come for the thousand francs which she gave him every month for the poor of his parish, and sent Nanon for the money; but the curate began with a smile, "To-day, mademoiselle, I have come to take counsel with you about a poor girl in whom all Saumur takes an interest, and who, through lack of charity to herself, is not living as a Christian should."

"*Mon Dieu!* M. le Curé, just now I can think of nobody but myself. I am very miserable, my only refuge is in the Church; her heart is large enough to hold all human sorrows, her love so inexhaustible that we need never fear to drain it dry."

"Well, mademoiselle, when we speak of this girl, we shall speak of you. Listen! If you would fain work out your salvation, there are but two ways open to you; you must either leave the world, or live in the world and submit to its laws—you must choose between the earthly and the heavenly vocation."

"Ah! your voice speaks to me when I need to hear a voice. Yes, God has sent you to me. I will bid the world farewell, and live for God alone, in silence and seclusion."

"But, my daughter, you should think long and prayerfully before taking so strong a measure. Marriage is life, the veil and the convent is death."

"Yes, death. Ah! if death would only come quickly, M. le Curé," she said, with dreadful eagerness.

"Death? But you have great obligations to fulfil towards society, mademoiselle. There is your family of poor, to whom

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you give clothes and firing in winter and work in summer. Your great fortune is a loan, of which you must give account one day. You have always looked on it as a sacred trust. It would be selfish to bury yourself in a convent, and you ought not to live alone in the world. In the first place, how can you endure the burden of your vast fortune alone? You might lose it. You will be involved in endless litigation; you will find yourself in difficulties from which you will not be able to extricate yourself. Take your pastor's word, a husband is useful; you ought not to lose what God has given into your charge. I speak to you as to a cherished lamb of my flock. You love God too sincerely to find hindrances to your salvation in the world; you are one of its fairest ornaments, and should remain in it as an example of holiness."

At this point Mme. des Grassins was announced. The banker's wife was smarting under a grievous disappointment, and thirsted for revenge.

"Mademoiselle . . ." she began. "Oh! M. le Curé is here. . . . I will say no more then. I came to speak about some matters of business, but I see you are deep in something else."

"Madame," said the curé, "I leave the field to you."

"Oh! M. le Curé, pray come back again; I stand in great need of your help just now."

"Yes, indeed, my poor child!" said Mme. des Grassins.

"What do you mean?" asked Eugénie and the curé both together.

"Do you suppose that I haven't heard that your cousin has come back and is going to marry Mlle. d'Aubrion? A woman doesn't go about with her wits in her pocket."

Eugénie was silent, there was a red flush on her face, but she made up her mind at once that henceforward no one should learn anything from her, and looked as impenetrable as her father used to do.

"Well, madame," she said, with a tinge of bitterness in her tones, "it seems that I, at any rate, carry my wits in my pocket, for I am quite at a loss to understand you. Speak out

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and explain yourself; you can speak freely before M. le Curé, he is my director, as you know."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, see for yourself what des Grassins says. Here is the letter."

Eugénie read:—

"My dear wife,—Charles Grandet has returned from the Indies, and has been in Paris these two months——"

"Two months!" said Eugénie to herself, and her hand fell to her side. After a moment she went on reading:—

"I had to dance attendance upon him, and called twice before the future Comte d'Aubrion would condescend to see me. All Paris is talking about his marriage, and the banns are published——"

"And he wrote to me after that?" Eugénie said to herself. She did not round off the sentence as a Parisienne would have done, with "Wretch that he is!" but her scorn was not one whit the less because it was unexpressed.

—"but it will be a good while yet before he marries; it is not likely that the Marquis d'Aubrion will give his daughter to the son of a bankrupt wine merchant. I called and told him of all the trouble we had been at, his uncle and I, in the matter of his father's failure, and of our clever dodges that had kept the creditors quiet so far. The insolent puppy had the effrontery to say to me—to *me,* who for five years have toiled day and night in his interest and to save his credit—that *his father's affairs were not his!* A solicitor would have wanted thirty or forty thousand francs of him in fees at the rate of one per cent on the total of the debt! But, patience! There is something that he does owe, however, and that the law shall make him pay, that is to say, twelve hundred thousand francs to his father's creditors, and I shall declare his father bankrupt. I mixed myself up in this affair on the word of that old crocodile of a Grandet, and I have given promises in the name

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of the family. M. le Comte d'Aubrion may not care for his honor, but I care a good deal for mine! So I shall just explain my position to the creditors. Still, I have too much respect for Mlle. Eugénie (with whom, in happier days, we hoped to be more closely connected) to take any steps before you have spoken to her——"

There Eugénie paused, and quietly returned the letter.

"I am obliged to you," she said to Mme. des Grassins "*We shall see*——"

"Your voice was exactly like your father's just then," exclaimed Mme. des Grassins.

"Madame," put in Nanon, producing Charles' cheque, "you have eight thousand francs to pay us."

"True. Be so good as to come with me, Mme. Cornoiller."

"M. le Curé," said Eugénie, with a noble composure that came of the thought which prompted her, "would it be a sin to remain in a state of virginity after marriage?"

"It is a case of conscience which I cannot solve. If you care to know what the celebrated Sanchez says in his great work, *De Matrimonio,* I could inform you to-morrow."

The curé took leave. Mlle. Grandet went up to her father's room and spent the day there by herself; she would not even come down to dinner, though Nanon begged and scolded. She appeared in the evening at the hour when the usual company began to arrive. The gray parlor in the Grandet's house had never been so well filled as it was that night. Every soul in the town knew by that time of Charles' return, and of his faithlessness and ingratitude; but their inquisitive curiosity was not to be gratified. Eugénie was a little late, but no one saw any traces of the cruel agitation through which she had passed; she could smile benignly in reply to the compassionate looks and words which some of the group thought fit to bestow on her; she bore her pain behind a mask of politeness.

About nine o'clock the card-players drew away from the tables, paid their losses, and criticised the game and the vari-

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ous points that had been made. Just as there was a general move in the direction of the door, an unexpected development took place; the news of it rang through Saumur and four prefectures round about for days after.

"Please stay, M. le Président."

There was not a person in the room who did not thrill with excitement at the words; M. de Bonfons, who was about to take his cane, turned quite white, and sat down again.

"The President takes the millions," said Mlle. de Gribeaucourt.

"It is quite clear that President de Bonfons is going to marry Mlle. Grandet," cried Mme. d'Orsonval.

"The best trick of the game!" commented the Abbé.

"A very pretty *slam*," said the notary.

Every one said his say and cut his joke, every one thought of the heiress mounted upon her millions as if she were on a pedestal. Here was the catastrophe of the drama, begun nine years ago, taking place under their eyes. To tell the President in the face of all Saumur to "stay" was as good as announcing at once that she meant to take the magistrate for her husband. Social conventionalities are rigidly observed in little country towns, and such an infraction as this was looked upon as a binding promise.

"M. le Président," Eugénie began in an unsteady voice, as soon as they were alone, "I know what you care about in me. Swear to leave me free till the end of my life, to claim none of the rights which marriage will give you over me, and my hand is yours. Oh!" she said, seeing him about to fall on his knees, "I have not finished yet. I must tell you frankly that there are memories in my heart which can never be effaced; that friendship is all that I can give my husband; I wish neither to affront him nor to be disloyal to my own heart. But you shall only have my hand and fortune at the price of an immense service which I want you to do me."

"Anything, I will do anything," said the president.

"Here are fifteen hundred thousand francs, M. le Président," she said, drawing from her bodice a certificate for a

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hundred shares in the Bank of France; "will you set out for Paris? You must not even wait till the morning, but go at once, to-night. You must go straight to M. des Grassins, ask him for a list of my uncle's creditors, call them together, and discharge all outstanding claims upon Guillaume Grandet's estate. Let the creditors have capital and interest at five per cent from the day the debts were contracted to the present time; and see that in every case a receipt in full is given, and that it is made out in proper form. You are a magistrate, you are the only person whom I feel that I can trust in such a case. You are a gentleman and a man of honor; you have given me your word, and, protected by your name, I will make the perilous voyage of life. We shall know how to make allowances for each other, for we have been acquainted for so long that it is almost as if we were related, and I am sure you would not wish to make me unhappy."

The president fell on his knees at the feet of the rich heiress in a paroxysm of joy.

"I will be your slave!" he said.

"When all the receipts are in your possession, sir," she went on, looking quietly at him, "you must take them, together with the bills, to my cousin Grandet, and give them to him with this letter. When you come back, I will keep my word."

The president understood the state of affairs perfectly well. "She is accepting me out of pique," he thought, and he hastened to do Mlle. Grandet's bidding with all possible speed, for fear some chance might bring about a reconciliation between the lovers.

As soon as M. de Bonfons left her, Eugénie sank into her chair and burst into tears. All was over, and *this* was the end.

The president traveled post to Paris and reached his journey's end on the following evening. The next morning he went to des Grassins, and arranged for a meeting of the creditors in the office of the notary with whom the bills had been deposited. Every man of them appeared, every man of them was punctual to a moment—one should give even creditors their dues.

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M. de Bonfons, in Mlle. Grandet's name, paid down the money in full, both capital and interest. They were paid interest! It was an amazing portent, a nine days' wonder in the business world of Paris. After the whole affair had been wound up, and when, by Eugénie's desire, des Grassins had received fifty thousand francs for his services, the president betook himself to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, and was lucky enough to find Charles at home, and in disgrace with his future father-in-law. The old Marquis had just informed that gentleman that until Guillaume Grandet's creditors were satisfied, a marriage with his daughter was not to be thought of.

To Charles, thus despondent, the president delivered the following letter:—

"DEAR COUSIN,—M. le Président de Bonfons has undertaken to hand you a discharge of all claims against my uncle's estate, and to deliver it in person, together with this letter, so that I may know that it is safely in your hands. I heard rumors of bankruptcy, and it occurred to me that difficulties might possibly arise as a consequence in the matter of your marriage with Mlle. d'Aubrion. Yes, cousin, you are quite right about my tastes and manners; I have lived, as you say, so entirely out of the world, that I know nothing of its ways or its calculations, and my companionship could never make up to you for the loss of the pleasures that you look to find in society. I hope that you will be happy according to the social conventions to which you have sacrificed our early love. The only thing in my power to give you to complete your happiness is your father's good name. Farewell; you will always find a faithful friend in your cousin, "EUGÉNIE."

In spite of himself an exclamation broke from the man of social ambitions when his eyes fell on the discharge and receipts. The president smiled.

"We can each announce our marriage," said he.

"Oh! you are to marry Eugénie, are you? Well, I am glad to hear of it; she is a kind-hearted girl. Why!" struck with a sudden luminous idea, "she must be rich?"

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"Four days ago she had about nineteen millions," the president said, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "to-day she has only seventeen."

Charles was dumfounded; he stared at the president.

"Seventeen mil——"

"Seventeen millions. Yes, sir; when we are married, Mlle. Grandet and I shall muster seven hundred and fifty thousand livres a year between us."

"My dear cousin," said Charles, with some return of assurance, "we shall be able to push each other's fortunes."

"Certainly," said the president. "There is something else here," he added, "a little case that I was to give only into your hands," and he set down a box containing the dressing-case upon the table.

The door opened, and in came Mme. la Marquise d'Aubrion; the great lady seemed to be unaware of Cruchot's existence. "Look here! dear," she said, "never mind what that absurd M. d'Aubrion has been saying to you; the Duchesse de Chaulieu has quite turned his head. I repeat it, there is nothing to prevent your marriage——"

"Nothing, madame," answered Charles. "The three millions which my father owed were paid yesterday."

"In money?" she asked.

"In full, capital and interest; I mean to rehabilitate his memory."

"What nonsense!" cried his mother-in-law. "Who is this person?" she asked in Charles' ear, as she saw Cruchot for the first time.

"My man of business," he answered in a low voice. The Marquise gave M. de Bonfons a disdainful bow, and left the room.

"We are beginning to push each other's fortunes already," said the president drily, as he took up his hat. "Good day, cousin."

"The old cockatoo from Saumur is laughing at me; I have a great mind to make him swallow six inches of cold steel," thought Charles.

But the president had departed.

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Three days later M. de Bonfons was back in Saumur again, and announced his marriage with Eugénie. After about six months he received his appointment as Councillor to the Court-Royal at Angers, and they went thither. But before Eugénie left Saumur she melted down the trinkets that had long been so sacred and so dear a trust, and gave them, together with the eight thousand francs which her cousin had returned to her, to make a reredos for the altar in the parish church whither she had gone so often to pray to God for him. Henceforward her life was spent partly at Angers, partly at Saumur. Her husband's devotion to the government at a political crisis was rewarded; he was made President of the Chamber, and finally First President. Then he awaited a general election with impatience; he had visions of a place in the government; he had dreams of a peerage; and then, and then . . .

"Then he would call cousins with the king, I suppose?" said Nanon, big Nanon, Mme. Cornoiller, wife of a burgess of Saumur, when her mistress told her of these lofty ambitions and high destinies.

Yet, after all, none of these ambitious dreams were to be realized, and the name of M. de Bonfons (he had finally dropped the patronymic Cruchot) was to undergo no further transformation. He died only eight days after his appointment as deputy of Saumur. God, who sees all hearts, and who never strikes without cause, punished him, doubtless, for his presumptuous schemes, and for the lawyer's cunning with which, *accurante Cruchot,* he had drafted his own marriage contract; in which husband and wife, *in case there was no issue of the marriage, bequeathed to each other all their property, both real estate and personalty, without exception or reservation, dispensing even with the formality of an inventory, provided that the omission of the said inventory should not injure their heirs and assigns, it being understood that this deed of gift, etc., etc.,* a clause which may throw some light on the profound respect which the president constantly showed for his wife's desire to live apart. Women cited M. le

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Premier Président as one of the most delicately considerate of men, and pitied him, and often went so far as to blame Eugénie for clinging to her passion and her sorrow; mingling, according to their wont, cruel insinuations with their criticisms of the president's wife.

"If Mme. de Bonfons lives apart from her husband, she must be in very bad health, poor thing. Is she likely to recover? What can be the matter with her? Is it cancer or gastritis, or what is it? Why does she not go to Paris and see some specialist? She has looked very sallow for a long time past. How can she not wish to have a child? They say she is very fond of her husband; why not give him an heir in his position? Do you know, it is really dreadful! If it is only some notion which she has taken into her head, it is unpardonable. Poor president!"

There is a certain keen insight and quick apprehensiveness that is the gift of a lonely and meditative life—and loneliness, and sorrow, and the discipline of the last few years had given Eugénie this clairvoyance of the narrow lot. She knew within herself that the president was anxious for her death that he might be the sole possessor of the colossal fortune, now still further increased by the deaths of the abbé and the notary, whom Providence had lately seen fit to promote from works to rewards. The poor solitary woman understood and pitied the president. Unworthy hopes and selfish calculations were his strongest motives for respecting Eugénie's hopeless passion. To give life to a child would be death to the egotistical dreams and ambitions that the president hugged within himself; was it for all these things that his career was cut short? while she must remain in her prison house, and the coveted gold for which she cared so little was to be heaped upon her. It was she who was to live, with the thought of heaven always before her, and holy thoughts for her companions, to give help and comfort secretly to those who were in distress. Mme. de Bonfons was left a widow three years after her marriage, with an income of eight hundred thousand livres.

She is beautiful still, with the beauty of a woman who is

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nearly forty years of age. Her face is very pale and quiet now, and there is a tinge of sadness in the low tones of her voice. She has simple manners, all the dignity of one who has passed through great sorrows, and the saintliness of a soul unspotted by the world; and, no less, the rigidness of an old maid, the little penurious ways and narrow ideas of a dull country town.

Although she has eight hundred thousand livres a year, she lives just as she used to do in the days of stinted allowances of fuel and food while she was still Eugénie Grandet; the fire is never lighted in the parlor before or after the dates fixed by her father, all the regulations in force in the days of her girlhood are still adhered to. She dresses as her mother did. That cold, sunless, dreary house, always overshadowed by the dark ramparts, is like her own life.

She looks carefully after her affairs; her wealth accumulates from year to year; perhaps she might even be called parsimonious, if it were not for the noble use she makes of her fortune. Various pious and charitable institutions, almshouses, and orphan asylums, a richly endowed public library, and donations to various churches in Saumur, are a sufficient answer to the charge of avarice which some few people have brought against her.

They sometimes speak of her in joke as *mademoiselle,* but in fact, people stand somewhat in awe of Mme. de Bonfons. It was as if she, whose heart went out so readily to others, was always to be the victim of their interested calculations, and to be cut off from them by a barrier of distrust; as if for all warmth and brightness in her life she was to find only the pale glitter of metal.

"No one loves me but you," she would sometimes say to Nanon.

Yet her hands are always ready to bind the wounds that other eyes do not see, in any house; and her way to heaven is one long succession of kindness and good deeds. The real greatness of her soul has risen above the cramping influences of her early life. And this is the life history of a woman who

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dwells in the world, yet is not of it, a woman so grandly fitted to be a wife and mother, but who has neither husband nor children nor kindred.

Of late the good folk of Saumur have begun to talk of a second marriage for her. Rumor is busy with her name and that of the Marquis de Froidfond; indeed, his family have begun to surround the rich widow, just as the Cruchots once flocked about Eugénie Grandet. Nanon and Cornoiller, so it is said, are in the interest of the Marquis, but nothing could be more false; for big Nanon and Cornoiller have neither of them wit enough to understand the corruptions of the world.

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A STUDY OF WOMAN

Dedicated to the Marquis Jean-Charles di Negra.

THE Marquise de Listomère is a young woman brought up in the spirit of the Restoration. She has principles, she fasts in season, she takes the Sacrament, she goes very much dressed to balls, to the Bouffons, to the Opera; her spiritual director allows her to combine the sacred and the profane. Always on good terms with the Church and the world, she is an incarnation of the present time, and seems to have taken the word *Legality* for her motto. The Marquise's conduct is marked by exactly enough devotion to enable her, under another Maintenon, to achieve the gloomy piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to adopt the manners and gallantry of the earlier years of his reign, if they ever could return.

Just now she is virtuous from interest, or, perhaps, by taste. Married some seven years since to the Marquis de Listomère, a deputy who expects a peerage, she perhaps thinks that her conduct may promote the ambitions of the family. Some women wait to pass judgment on her till Monsieur de Listomère is made Pair de France, and till she is six-and-thirty—a time of life when most women discover that they are the dupes of social laws.

The Marquis is an insignificant personage; he is in favor at Court; his good qualities, like his faults, are negative; the former can no more give him a reputation for virtue than the latter can give him the sort of brilliancy bestowed by vice. As a deputy he never speaks, but he votes "straight;" and at home, he behaves as he does in the Chamber. He is considered the best husband in France. Though he is incapable

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of enthusiasms, he never scolds, unless he is kept waiting. His friends nickname him "Cloudy weather;" and, in fact, there is in him no excessively bright light, and no utter darkness. He is exactly like all the Ministers that have succeeded each other in France since the Charter.

A woman with principles could hardly have fallen into better hands. Is it not a great thing for a virtuous woman to have married a man incapable of a folly? Dandies have been known to venture on the impertinence of slightly pressing the Marquise's hand when dancing with her; they met only looks of scorn, and all have experienced that insulting indifference which, like spring frosts, chills the germs of the fairest hopes. Handsome men, witty men, coxcombs, sentimental men who derive nourishment from sucking the knob of their walking-sticks, men of name and men of fame, men of high birth and of low, all have blenched before her. She has won the right of talking as long and as often as she pleases with men whom she thinks intelligent, without being entered in the calendar of scandal. Some coquettes are capable of pursuing this plan for seven years on end, to gratify their fancy at last; but to ascribe such a covert motive to Madame de Listomère would be to calumniate her. I had been so happy as to meet this Phœnix of a Marquise; she talks well, I am a good listener. I pleased her, and I go to her evening parties. This was the object of my ambition.

Neither plain nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a brilliant complexion, and very red lips; she is tall and well made, has a small, slender foot, which she does not display; her eyes, far from being dulled, as most eyes are in Paris, have a soft gleam which becomes magical when by chance she is animated. You feel there is a soul under this ill-defined personality. When she is interested in the conversation, she reveals the grace that lies buried under the prudery of cold demeanor, and then she is charming. She does not crave for success, and she gets it. We always find the thing we do not seek. This statement is too often true not to become a proverb one day. It will be the moral of this

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tale, which I should not allow myself to relate if it were not at this moment the talk of every drawing-room in Paris.

One evening, about a month since, the Marquise de Listomère danced with a young man as modest as he is heedless, full of good qualities, but showing only his bad ones; he is impassioned, and laughs at passion; he has talent, and hides it; he assumes the *savant* with aristocrats, and affects to be aristocratic with savants.

Eugène de Rastignac is one of those very sensible young men who try everything, and seem to sound other men to discover what the future will bring forth. Pending the age when he will be ambitious, he laughs at everything; he has grace and originality—two qualities which are rare, because they exclude each other. Without aiming at success, he talked to Madame de Listomère for about half an hour. Without following the deviations of a conversation which, beginning with *William Tell,* went on to the duties of woman, he looked at the Marquise more than once in a way to embarrass her; then he left her, and spoke to her no more all the evening. He danced, sat down to *écarté,* lost a little money, and went home to bed. I have the honor of assuring you that this is exactly what happened. I have added, I have omitted nothing.

The next morning Rastignac woke late, remained in bed, where he gave himself up, no doubt, to some of those morning day-dreams in which a young man glides, like a sylph, behind more than one curtain of silk, wool, or cotton. At such moments, the heavier the body is with sleep, the more nimble is the fancy. Finally Rastignac got up without yawning too much, as so many ill-bred people do, rang for his man-servant, ordered some tea, and drank of it immoderately—which will not seem strange to those who like tea; but, to account for this to those persons who only regard tea as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was writing; he sat at his ease, and his feet were more often on the fire-dogs than in his foot-muff.

Oh! to sit with your feet on the polished bar that rests on

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the two brackets of a fender, and dream of your love affairs while wrapped in your dressing-gown, is so delightful a thing, that I deeply regret having no mistress, no fire-dogs, and no dressing-gown. When I shall have all those good things, I shall not write my experiences, I shall take the benefit of them.

The first letter Eugène had to write was finished in a quarter of an hour. He folded it, sealed it, and left it lying in front of him without any address. The second letter, begun at eleven o'clock, was not finished till noon. The four pages were written all over.

"That woman runs in my head," said he to himself as he folded the second missive, leaving it there, and intending to address it after ending his involuntary reverie. He crossed the fronts of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, stuffed his hands into the pockets of his red cashmere trousers, and threw himself back in a delicious armchair with deep ears, of which the seat and back were set at the comfortable angle of a hundred and twenty degrees. He drank no more tea, but remained passive, his eyes fixed on the little gilt fist which formed the knob of his fire-shovel, without seeing the shovel, or the hand, or the gilding. He did not even make up the fire. This was a great mistake! Is it not an intense pleasure to fidget with the fire when dreaming of women? Our fancy lends speech to the little blue tongues which suddenly burst up and babble on the hearth. We can find a meaning in the sudden and noisy language of a *bourguignon*.

At this word I must pause and insert, for the benefit of the ignorant, an explanation vouchsafed by a very distinguished etymologist, who wishes to remain anonymous. *Bourguignon* is the popular and symbolical name given, ever since the reign of Charles VI., to the loud explosions which result in the ejection on to a rug or a dress of a fragment of charcoal, the germ of a conflagration. The heat, it is said, explodes a bubble of air remaining in the heart of the wood, in the trail of some gnawing grub. *Inde amor, inde Bur-*

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gundus. We quake as we see the charred pieces coming down like an avalanche when we had balanced them so industriously between two blazing logs. Oh! making up a wood-fire when you are in love is the material expression of your sentiments.

It was at this moment that I entered Eugène's room; he started violently, and said:

"So there you are, my dear Horace. How long have you been here?"

"I have this moment come."

"Ah!"

He took the two letters, addressed them, and rang for his servant.

"Take these two notes."

And Joseph went without a remark. Excellent servant!

And we proceeded to discuss the expedition to the Morea, in which I wanted to be employed as surgeon. Eugène pointed out that I should lose much by leaving Paris, and we then talked of indifferent things. I do not think that I shall be blamed for omitting our conversation.

When Madame de Listomère rose at about two in the afternoon, her maid Caroline handed her a letter, which she read while Caroline was dressing her hair. (An imprudence committed by a great many young wives.)

"Ah, dear angel of love, my treasure of life and happiness!"—on reading these words, the Marquise was going to throw the letter into the fire; but a fancy flashed through her head, which any virtuous woman will understand to a marvel, namely, to see how a man might end who began in this strain. She read on. When she turned her fourth page, she dropped her arms like a person who is tired.

"Caroline," said she, "go and find out who left this letter for me."

"Madame, I took it from M. le Baron de Rastignac's manservant."

There was a long silence.

"Will madame dress now?"

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"No."

"He must be excessively impertinent!" thought the Marquise.—I may ask any woman to make her own commentary.

Madame de Listomère closed hers with a formal resolution to shut her door on Monsieur Eugène, and, if she should meet him in company, to treat him with more than contempt; for his audacity was not to be compared with any of the other instances which the Marquise had at last forgiven. At first she thought she would keep the letter, but, on due reflection, she burned it.

"Madame has just received such a flaming love-letter, and she read it!" said Caroline to the housemaid.

"I never should have thought it of madame," said the old woman, quite astonished.

That evening the Marquise was at the house of the Marquis de Beauséant, where she would probably meet Rastignac. It was a Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant was distantly related to Monsieur de Rastignac, so the young man could not fail to appear in the course of the evening. At two in the morning, Madame de Listomère, who had stayed so late solely to crush Eugène by her coldness, had waited in vain. A witty writer, Stendahl, has given the whimsical name of crystallization to the process worked out by the Marquise's mind before, during, and after this evening.

Four days later Eugène was scolding his man-servant.

"Look here, Joseph; I shall be obliged to get rid of you, my good fellow."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"You do nothing but blunder. Where did you take the two letters I gave you on Friday?"

Joseph was bewildered. Like a statue in a cathedral porch he stood motionless, wholly absorbed in the travail of his ideas. Suddenly he smiled foolishly, and said:

"Monsieur, one was for Madame la Marquise de Listomère, Rue Saint-Dominique, and the other was for Monsieur's lawyer——"

"Are you sure of what you say?"

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Joseph stood dumfounded. I must evidently interfere—happening to be present at the moment.

"Joseph is right," said I. Eugène turned round to me. "I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and——"

"And," said Eugène, interrupting me, "was not one of them for Madame de Nucingen?"

"No, by all the devils! And so I supposed, my dear boy, that your heart had pirouetted from the Rue Saint-Lazare to the Rue Saint-Dominique."

Eugène struck his forehead with the palm of his hand, and began to smile. Joseph saw plainly that the fault was none of his.

Now, there are certain moral reflections on which all young men should meditate. Mistake the first: Eugène thought it amusing to have made Madame de Listomère laugh at the blunder that had put her in possession of a love-letter which was not intended for her. Mistake the second: He did not go to see Madame de Listomère till four days after the misadventure, thus giving the thoughts of a virtuous young woman time to crystallize. And there were a dozen more mistakes which must be passed over in silence to give ladies *ex professo* the pleasure of deducing them for the benefit of those who cannot guess them.

Eugène arrived at the Marquise's door; but as he was going in, the porter stopped him, and told him that Madame de Listomère was out. As he was getting into his carriage again, the Marquis came in.

"Come up, Eugène," said he; "my wife is at home."

Oh! forgive the Marquis. A husband, however admirable, scarcely ever attains to perfection.

Rastignac as he went upstairs discerned the ten fallacies in worldly logic which stood on this page of the fair book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband come in with Eugène, she could not help coloring. The young Baron observed the sudden flush. If the most modest of men never

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quite loses some little dregs of conceit, which he can no more get rid of than a woman can throw off her inevitable vanities, who can blame Eugène for saying to himself, "What! this stronghold too?" and he settled his head in his cravat. Though young men are not very avaricious, they all love to add a head to their collection of medals.

Monsieur de Listomère seized on the *Gazette de France*, which he saw in a corner by the fireplace, and went to the window to form, by the help of the newspaper, an opinion of his own as to the state of France. No woman, not even a prude, is long in embarrassment even in the most difficult situation in which she can find herself; she seems always to carry in her hand the fig-leaf given to her by our mother Eve. And so, when Eugène, having interpreted the orders given to the porter in a sense flattering to his vanity, made his bow to Madame de Listomère with a tolerably deliberate air, she was able to conceal all her thoughts behind one of those feminine smiles, which are more impenetrable than a King's speech.

"Are you unwell, madame? You had closed your door."

"No, monsieur."

"You were going out perhaps?"

"Not at all."

"You are expecting somebody?"

"Nobody."

"If my visit is ill timed, you have only the Marquis to blame. I was obeying your mysterious orders when he himself invited me into the sanctuary."

"Monsieur de Listomère was not in my confidence. There are certain secrets which it is not always prudent to share with one's husband."

The firm, mild tone in which the Marquise spoke these words, and the imposing dignity of her glance, were enough to make Rastignac feel that he had been in too much haste to plume himself.

"I understand, madame," said he, laughing; "I must there-

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fore congratulate myself all the more on having met Monsieur le Marquis; he has procured me an opportunity for offering you an explanation, which would be fraught with danger, but that you are kindness itself."

The Marquise looked at the young Baron with considerable astonishment, but she replied with dignity.

"On your part, monsieur, silence will be the best excuse. On my side I promise you to forget entirely—a forgiveness you scarcely merit."

"Forgiveness is needless, madame, when there has been no offence.—The letter you received," he added in an undertone, "and which you must have thought so unseemly, was not intended for you."

The Marquise smiled in spite of herself; she wished to appear offended.

"Why tell a falsehood?" she replied with an air of disdainful amusement, but in a very friendly tone. "Now that I have scolded you enough, I am quite ready to laugh at a stratagem not devoid of skill. I know some poor women who would be caught by it. 'Good heavens, how he loves me!' they would say." She forced a laugh, and added with an indulgent air, "If we are to remain friends, let me hear nothing more of mistakes of which I cannot be the dupe."

"On my honor, madame, you are far more so than you fancy," Eugène eagerly replied.

"What are you talking about?" asked Monsieur de Listomère, who for a minute had been listening to the conversation, without being able to pierce the darkness of its meaning.

"Oh, nothing that will interest you," said Madame de Listomère.

The Marquis quietly returned to his paper, saying, "I see Madame de Mortsauf is dead; your poor brother is at Clochegourde no doubt."

"Do you know, monsieur," said the Marquise, addressing Eugène, "that you have just made a very impertinent speech?"

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"If I did not know the strictness of your principles," he replied simply, "I should fancy you either meant to put ideas into my head which I dare not allow myself, or to wring my secret from me; or perhaps, indeed, you wish to make fun of me."

The Marquise smiled. This smile put Eugène out of patience.

"May you always believe, madame, in the offence I did not commit!" said he. "And I fervently hope that chance may not lead you to discover in society the person who was intended to read that letter——"

"What! Still Madame de Nucingen?" cried Madame de Listomère, more anxious to master the secret than to be revenged on the young man for his retort.

Eugène reddened. A man must be more than five-and-twenty not to redden when he is blamed for the stupid fidelity which women laugh at only to avoid betraying how much they envy its object. However, he said, calmly enough, "Why not, madame?"

These are the blunders we commit at five-and-twenty. This confession agitated Madame de Listomère violently; but Eugène was not yet able to analyze a woman's face as seen in a glimpse, or from one side. Only her lips turned white. She rang to have some wood put on the fire, and so obliged Eugène to rise to take leave. "If that is the case," said the Marquise, stopping Eugène by her cold, precise manner, "you will find it difficult, monsieur, to explain by what chance my name happened to come to your pen. An address written on a letter is not like the first-come crush hat which a man may heedlessly take for his own on leaving a ball."

Eugène, put quite out of countenance, looked at the Marquise with a mingled expression of stupidity and fatuousness; he felt that he was ridiculous, stammered out some schoolboy speech, and left. A few days later Madame de Listomère had indisputable proof of Eugène's veracity.

For more than a fortnight she has not gone into society.

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The Marquis tells every one who asks him the reason of this change:

"My wife has a gastric attack."

I, who attend her, and who know her secret, know that she is only suffering from a little nervous crisis, and takes advantage of it to stay quietly at home.

PARIS, *February* 1839.

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ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN

To Léon Gozlan as a Token of Literary Good-fellowship.

At Paris there are almost always two separate parties going on at every ball and rout. First, an official party, composed of the persons invited, a fashionable and much-bored circle. Each one grimaces for his neighbor's eye; most of the younger women are there for one person only; when each woman has assured herself that for that one she is the handsomest woman in the room, and that the opinion is perhaps shared by a few others, a few insignificant phrases are exchanged, as: "Do you think of going away soon to La Crampade?" "How well Madame de Portenduère sang!" "Who is the little woman with such a load of diamonds?" Or, after firing off some smart epigrams, which give transient pleasure, and leave wounds that rankle long, the groups thin out, the mere lookers on go away, and the waxlights burn down to the sconces.

The mistress of the house then waylays a few artists, amusing people or intimate friends, saying, "Do not go yet; we will have a snug little supper." These collect in some small room. The second, the real party, now begins; a party where, as of old, every one can hear what is said, conversation is general, each one is bound to be witty and to contribute to the amusement of all. Everything is made to tell, honest laughter takes the place of the gloom which in company saddens the prettiest faces. In short, where the rout ends pleasure begins.

The Rout, a cold display of luxury, a review of self-conceits in full dress, is one of those English inventions which tend to *mechanize* other nations. England seems bent on seeing

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the whole world as dull as itself, and dull in the same way. So this second party is, in some French houses, a happy protest on the part of the old spirit of our light-hearted people. Only, unfortunately, so few houses protest; and the reason is a simple one. If we no longer have many suppers nowadays, it is because never, under any rule, have there been fewer men placed, established, and successful than under the reign of Louis Philippe, when the Revolution began again, lawfully. Everybody is on the march some whither, or trotting at the heels of Fortune. Time has become the costliest commodity, so no one can afford the lavish extravagance of going home to-morrow morning and getting up late. Hence, there is no second soirée now but at the houses of women rich enough to entertain, and since July 1830 such women may be counted in Paris.

In spite of the covert opposition of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among them Madame d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, have not chosen to give up the share of influence they exercised in Paris, and have not closed their houses.

The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches is noted in Paris as being the last refuge where the old French wit has found a home, with its reserved depths, its myriad subtle byways, and its exquisite politeness. You will there still find grace of manner notwithstanding the conventionalities of courtesy, perfect freedom of talk notwithstanding the reserve which is natural to persons of breeding, and, above all, a liberal flow of ideas. No one there thinks of keeping his thought for a play; and no one regards a story as material for a book. In short, the hideous skeleton of literature at bay never stalks there, on the prowl for a clever sally or an interesting subject.

The memory of one of these evenings especially dwells with me, less by reason of a confidence in which the illustrious de Marsay opened up one of the deepest recesses of woman's heart, than on account of the reflections to which his narrative gave rise, as to the changes that have taken place in the French woman since the fateful revolution of July.

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On that evening chance had brought together several persons, whose indisputable merits have won them European reputations. This is not a piece of flattery addressed to France, for there were a good many foreigners present. And, indeed, the men who most shone were not the most famous. Ingenious repartee, acute remarks, admirable banter, pictures sketched with brilliant precision, all sparkled and flowed without elaboration, were poured out without disdain, but without effort, and were exquisitely expressed and delicately appreciated. The men of the world especially were conspicuous for their really artistic grace and spirit.

Elsewhere in Europe you will find elegant manners, cordiality, genial fellowship, and knowledge; but only in Paris, in this drawing-room, and those to which I have alluded, does the particular wit abound which gives an agreeable and changeful unity to all these social qualities, an indescribable river-like flow which makes this profusion of ideas, of definitions, of anecdotes, of historical incidents, meander with ease. Paris, the capital of taste, alone possesses the science which makes conversation a tourney in which each type of wit is condensed into a shaft, each speaker utters his phrase and casts his experience in a word, in which every one finds amusement, relaxation, and exercise. Here, then, alone, will you exchange ideas; here you need not, like the dolphin in the fable, carry a monkey on your shoulders; here you will be understood, and will not risk staking your gold pieces against base metal.

Here, again, secrets neatly betrayed, and talk, light or deep, play and eddy, changing their aspect and hue at every phrase. Eager criticism and crisp anecdotes lead on from one to the next. All eyes are listening, a gesture asks a question, and an expressive look gives the answer. In short, and in a word, everything is wit and mind.

The phenomenon of speech, which, when duly studied and well handled, is the power of the actor and the story-teller, had never so completely bewitched me. Nor was I alone under the influence of its spell; we all spent a delightful

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evening. The conversation had drifted into anecdote, and brought out in its rushing course some curious confessions, several portraits, and a thousand follies, which make this enchanting improvisation impossible to record; still, by setting these things down in all their natural freshness and abruptness, their elusive divarications, you may perhaps feel the charm of a real French evening, taken at the moment when the most engaging familiarity makes each one forget his own interests, his personal conceit, or, if you like, his pretensions.

At about two in the morning, as supper ended, no one was left sitting round the table but intimate friends, proved by an intercourse of fifteen years, and some persons of great taste and good breeding, who knew the world. By tacit agreement, perfectly carried out, at supper every one renounced his pretensions to importance. Perfect equality set the tone. But indeed there was no one present who was not very proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches always insists on her guests remaining at table till they leave, having frequently remarked the change which a move produces in the spirit of a party. Between the dining-room and the drawing-room the charm is destroyed. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author after shaving are different from those he had before. If Sterne is right, may it not be boldly asserted that the frame of mind of a party at table is not the same as that of the same persons returned to the drawing-room? The atmosphere is not heady, the eye no longer contemplates the brilliant disorder of the dessert, lost are the happy effects of that laxness of mood, that benevolence which comes over us while we remain in the humor peculiar to the well-filled man, settled comfortably on one of the springy chairs which are made in these days. Perhaps we are not more ready to talk face to face with the dessert and in the society of good wine, during the delightful interval when every one may sit with an elbow on the table and his head resting on his hand. Not only does every one like to talk then, but also to listen. Digestion,

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which is almost always attent, is loquacious or silent, as char acters differ. Then every one finds his opportunity.

Was not this preamble necessary to make you know the charm of the narrative, by which a celebrated man, now dead, depicted the innocent jesuistry of women, painting it with the subtlety peculiar to persons who have seen much of the world, and which makes statesmen such delightful story-tellers when, like Prince Talleyrand and Prince Metternich, they vouchsafe to tell a story?

De Marsay, prime minister for some six months, had already given proofs of superior capabilities. Those who had known him long were not indeed surprised to see him display all the talents and various aptitudes of a statesman; still it might yet be a question whether he would prove to be a solid politician, or had merely been moulded in the fire of circumstance. This question had just been asked by a man whom he had made préfet, a man of wit and observation, who had for a long time been a journalist, and who admired de Marsay without infusing into his admiration that dash of acrid criticism by which, in Paris, one superior man excuses himself from admiring another.

"Was there ever," said he, "in your former life, any event, any thought or wish which told you what your vocation was?" asked Émile Blondet; "for we all, like Newton, have our apple, which falls and leads us to the spot where our faculties develop——"

"Yes," said de Marsay; "I will tell you about it."

Pretty women, political dandies, artists, old men, de Marsay's intimate friends,—all settled themselves comfortably, each in his favorite attitude, to look at the Minister. Need it be said that the servants had left, that the doors were shut, and the curtains drawn over them? The silence was so complete that the murmurs of the coachmen's voices could be heard from the courtyard, and the pawing and champing made by horses when asking to be taken back to their stable.

"The statesman, my friends, exists by one single quality," said the Minister, playing with his gold and mother-of-pearl

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dessert knife. "To wit: the power of always being master of himself; of profiting more or less, under all circumstances, by every event, however fortuitous; in short, of having within himself a cold and disinterested other self, who looks on as a spectator at all the changes of life, noting our passions and our sentiments, and whispering to us in every case the judgment of a sort of moral ready-reckoner."

"That explains why a statesman is so rare a thing in France," said old Lord Dudley.

"From a sentimental point of view, this is horrible," the Minister went on. "Hence, when such a phenomenon is seen in a young man—Richelieu, who, when warned overnight by a letter of Concini's peril, slept till midday, when his benefactor was killed at ten o'clock—or say Pitt, or Napoleon, he is a monster. I became such a monster at a very early age, thanks to a woman."

"I fancied," said Madame de Montcornet with a smile, "that more politicians were undone by us than we could make."

"The monster of which I speak is a monster just because he withstands you," replied de Marsay, with a little ironical bow.

"If this is a love-story," the Baronne de Nucingen interposed, "I request that it may not be interrupted by any reflections."

"Reflection is so antipathetic to it!" cried Joseph Bridau.

"I was seventeen," de Marsay went on; "the Restoration was being consolidated; my old friends know how impetuous and fervid I was then. I was in love for the first time, and I was—I may say so now—one of the handsomest young fellows in Paris. I had youth and good looks, two advantages due to good fortune, but of which we are all as proud as of a conquest. I must be silent as to the rest.—Like all youths, I was in love with a woman six years older than myself. No one of you here," said he, looking carefully round the table, "can suspect her name or recognize her. Ronquerolles alone, at the time, ever guessed my secret. He has kept it well,

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but I should have feared his smile. However, he is gone," said the Minister, looking round.

"He would not stay to supper," said Madame de Nucingen.

"For six months, possessed by my passion," de Marsay went on, "but incapable of suspecting that it had overmastered me, I had abandoned myself to that rapturous idolatry which is at once the triumph and the frail joy of the young. I treasured *her* old gloves; I drank an infusion of the flowers *she* had worn; I got out of bed at night to go and gaze at *her* window. All my blood rushed to my heart when I inhaled the perfume she used. I was miles away from knowing that woman is a stove with a marble casing."

"Oh! spare us your terrible verdicts," cried Madame de Montcornet with a smile.

"I believe I should have crushed with my scorn the philosopher who first uttered this terrible but profoundly true thought," said de Marsay. "You are all far too keen-sighted for me to say any more on that point. These few words will remind you of your own follies.

"A great lady if ever there was one, a widow without children—oh! all was perfect—my idol would shut herself up to mark my linen with her hair; in short, she responded to my madness by her own. And how can we fail to believe in passion when it has the guarantee of madness?

"We each devoted all our minds to concealing a love so perfect and so beautiful from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. And what charm we found in our escapades! Of her I will say nothing. She was perfection then, and to this day is considered one of the most beautiful women in Paris; but at that time a man would have endured death to win one of her glances. She had been left with an amount of fortune sufficient for a woman who had loved and was adored; but the Restoration, to which she owed renewed lustre, made it seem inadequate in comparison with her name. In my position I was so fatuous as never to dream of a suspicion. Though my jealousy would have been of a hundred and twenty Othello-power, that terrible passion slumbered in me

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as gold in the nugget. I would have ordered my servant to thrash me if I had been so base as ever to doubt the purity of that angel—so fragile and so strong, so fair, so artless, pure, spotless, and whose blue eye allowed my gaze to sound it to the very depths of her heart with adorable submissiveness. Never was there the slightest hesitancy in her attitude, her look, or word; always white and fresh, and ready for the Beloved like the Oriental Lily of the 'Song of Songs!' Ah! my friends!" sadly exclaimed the Minister, grown young again, "a man must hit his head very hard on the marble to dispel that poem!"

This cry of nature, finding an echo in the listeners, spurred the curiosity he had excited in them with so much skill.

"Every morning, riding Sultan—the fine horse you sent me from England," de Marsay went on, addressing Lord Dudley, "I rode past her open carriage, the horses' pace being intentionally reduced to a walk, and read the order of the day signaled to me by the flowers of her bouquet in case we were unable to exchange a few words. Though we saw each other almost every evening in society, and she wrote to me every day, to deceive the curious and mislead the observant we had adopted a scheme of conduct: never to look at each other; to avoid meeting; to speak ill of each other. Self-admiration, swagger, or playing the disdained swain,—all these old manœuvres are not to compare on either part with a false passion professed for an indifferent person and an air of indifference towards the true idol. If two lovers will only play that game, the world will always be deceived; but then they must be very secure of each other.

"Her stalking-horse was a man in high favor, a courtier, cold and sanctimonious, whom she never received at her own house. This little comedy was performed for the benefit of simpletons and drawing-room circles, who laughed at it. Marriage was never spoken of between us; six years' difference of age might give her pause; she knew nothing of my fortune, of which, on principle, I have always kept the secret. I, on my part, fascinated by her wit and manners, by the extent of

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her knowledge and her experience of the world, would have married her without a thought. At the same time, her reserve charmed me. If she had been the first to speak of marriage in a certain tone, I might perhaps have noted it as vulgar in that accomplished soul.

"Six months, full and perfect—a diamond of the purest water! That has been my portion of love in this base world.

"One morning, attacked by the feverish stiffness which marks the beginning of a cold, I wrote her a line to put off one of those secret festivals which are buried under the roofs of Paris like pearls in the sea. No sooner was the letter sent than remorse seized me: she will not believe that I am ill! thought I. She was wont to affect jealousy and suspiciousness.—When jealousy is genuine," said de Marsay, interrupting himself, "it is the visible sign of an unique passion."

"Why?" asked the Princesse de Cadignan eagerly.

"Unique and true love," said de Marsay, "produces a sort of corporeal apathy attuned to the contemplation into which one falls. Then the mind complicates everything; it works on itself, pictures its fancies, turns them into reality and torment; and such jealousy is as delightful as it is distressing."

A foreign minister smiled as, by the light of memory, he felt the truth of this remark.

"Besides," de Marsay went on, "I said to myself, why miss a happy hour? Was it not better to go, even though feverish? And, then, if she learns that I am ill, I believe her capable of hurrying here and compromising herself. I made an effort; I wrote a second letter, and carried it myself, for my confidential servant was now gone. The river lay between us. I had to cross Paris; but at last, within a suitable distance of her house, I caught sight of a messenger; I charged him to have the note sent up to her at once, and I had the happy idea of driving past her door in a hackney cab to see whether she might not by chance receive the two letters together. At the moment when I arrived it was two o'clock; the great gate opened to admit a carriage. Whose?—That of the stalking-horse!

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"It is fifteen years since—well, even while I tell the tale, I, the exhausted orator, the Minister dried up by the friction of public business, I still feel a surging in my heart and the hot blood about my diaphragm. At the end of an hour I passed once more; the carriage was still in the courtyard! My note no doubt was in the porter's hands. At last, at half-past three, the carriage drove out. I could observe my rival's expression; he was grave, and did not smile; but he was in love, and no doubt there was business in hand.

"I went to keep my appointment; the queen of my heart met me; I saw her calm, pure, serene. And here I must confess that I have always thought that Othello was not only stupid, but showed very bad taste. Only a man who is half a negro could behave so: indeed Shakespeare felt this when he called his play 'The Moor of Venice.' The sight of the woman we love is such a balm to the heart that it must dispel anguish, doubt, and sorrow. All my rage vanished. I could smile again. Hence this cheerfulness, which at my age now would be the most atrocious dissimulation, was the result of my youth and my love. My jealousy once buried, I had the power of observation. My ailing condition was evident; the horrible doubts that had fermented in me increased it. At last I found an opening for putting in these words: 'You have had no one with you this morning?' making a pretext of the uneasiness I had felt in the fear lest she should have disposed of her time after receiving my first note.—'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'only a man could have such ideas! As if I could think of anything but your suffering. Till the moment when I received your second note I could think only of how I could contrive to go to see you.'—'And you were alone?'—'Alone,' said she, looking at me with a face of innocence so perfect that it must have been his distrust of such a look as that which made the Moor kill Desdemona. As she lived alone in the house, the word was a fearful lie. One single lie destroys the absolute confidence which to some souls is the very foundation of happiness.

"'To explain to you what passed in me at that moment it

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must be assumed that we have an internal self of which the exterior *I* is but the husk; that this self, as brilliant as light, is as fragile as a shade—well, that beautiful self was in me thenceforth for ever shrouded in crape. Yes; I felt a cold and fleshless hand cast over me the winding-sheet of experience, dooming me to the eternal mourning into which the first betrayal plunges the soul. As I cast my eyes down that she might not observe my dizziness, this proud thought somewhat restored my strength: 'If she is deceiving you, she is unworthy of you!'

"I ascribed my sudden reddening and the tears which started to my eyes to an attack of pain, and the sweet creature insisted on driving me home with the blinds of the cab drawn. On the way she was full of a solicitude and tenderness that might have deceived the Moor of Venice whom I have taken as a standard of comparison. Indeed, if that great child were to hesitate two seconds longer, every intelligent spectator feels that he would ask Desdemona's forgiveness. Thus, killing the woman is the act of a boy.—She wept as we parted; so much was she distressed at being unable to nurse me herself. She wished she were my valet, in whose happiness she found a cause of envy, and all this was as elegantly expressed, oh! as Clarissa might have written in her happiness. There is always a precious ape in the prettiest and most angelic woman!"

At these words all the women looked down, as if hurt by this brutal truth so brutally stated.

"I will say nothing of the night, nor of the week I spent," de Marsay went on. "I discovered that I was a statesman."

It was so well said that we all uttered an admiring exclamation.

"As I thought over the really cruel vengeance to be taken on a woman," said de Marsay, continuing his story, "with infernal ingenuity—for, as we had loved each other, some terrible and irreparable revenges were possible—I despised myself, I felt how common I was, I insensibly formulated a horrible code—that of Indulgence. In taking vengeance on

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a woman, do we not in fact admit that there is but one for us, that we cannot do without her? And, then, is revenge the way to win her back? If she is not indispensable, if there are other women in the world, why not grant her the right to change which we assume?

"This, of course, applies only to passion; in any other sense it would be socially wrong. Nothing more clearly proves the necessity for indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion. The two sexes must be chained up, like wild beasts as they are, by inevitable law, deaf and mute. Eliminate revenge, and infidelity in love is nothing. Those who believe that for them there is but one woman in the world must be in favor of vengeance, and then there is but one form of it—that of Othello.

"Mine was different."

The words produced in each of us the imperceptible movement which newspaper writers represent in Parliamentary reports by the words: *great sensation.*

"Cured of my cold, and of my pure, absolute, divine love, I flung myself into an adventure, of which the heroine was charming, and of a style of beauty utterly opposed to that of my deceiving angel. I took care not to quarrel with this clever woman, who was so good an actress, for I doubt whether true love can give such gracious delights as those lavished by such a dexterous fraud. Such refined hypocrisy is as good as virtue.—I am not speaking to you Englishwomen, my lady," said the Minister suavely, addressing Lady Barimore, Lord Dudley's daughter. "I tried to be the same lover.

"I wished to have some of my hair worked up for my new angel, and I went to a skilled artist who at that time dwelt in the Rue Boucher. The man had a monopoly of capillary keepsakes, and I mention his address for the benefit of those who have not much hair; he has plenty of every kind and every color. After I had explained my order, he showed me his work. I then saw achievements of patience surpassing those which the story books ascribe to fairies, or which are executed by prisoners. He brought me up to date as to the

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caprices and fashions governing the use of hair. 'For the last year,' said he, 'there has been a rage for marking linen with hair; happily I had a fine collection of hair and skilled needlewomen.'—On hearing this a suspicion flashed upon me; I took out my handkerchief and said, 'So this was done in your shop, with false hair?'—He looked at the handkerchief, and said, 'Ay! that lady was very particular, she insisted on verifying the tint of the hair. My wife herself marked those handkerchiefs. You have there, sir, one of the finest pieces of work we have ever executed.' Before this last ray of light I might have believed something—might have taken a woman's word. I left the shop still having faith in pleasure, but where love was concerned I was as atheistical as a mathematician.

"Two months later I was sitting by the side of the ethereal being in her boudoir, on her sofa; I was holding one of her hands—they were very beautiful—and we scaled the Alps of sentiment, culling their sweetest flowers, and pulling off the daisy-petals; there is always a moment when one pulls daisies to pieces, even if it is in a drawing-room and there are no daisies. At the intensest moment of tenderness, and when we are most in love, love is so well aware of its own short duration that we are irresistibly urged to ask, 'Do you love me? Will you love me always?' I seized the elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so full-blown, to lead her to tell her most delightful lies, in the enchanting language of rapturous exaggeration and high-flown poetry peculiar to love. Charlotte displayed her choicest allurements: She could not live without me; I was to her the only man in the world; she feared to weary me, because my presence bereft her of all her wits: with me all her faculties were lost in love; she was indeed too tender to escape alarms; for the last six months she had been seeking some way to bind me to her eternally, and God alone knew that secret; in short, I was her god!"

The women who heard de Marsay seemed offended by seeing themselves so well acted, for he seconded the words by airs,

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and sidelong attitudes, and mincing grimaces which were quite illusory.

"At the very moment when I might have believed these adorable falsehoods, as I still held her right hand in mine, I said to her, 'When are you to marry the Duke?'

"The thrust was so direct, my gaze met hers so boldly, and her hand lay so tightly in mine, that her start, slight as it was, could not be disguised; her eyes fell before mine, and a faint blush colored her cheeks.—'The Duke! What do you mean?' she said, affecting great astonishment.—'I know everything,' replied I; 'and in my opinion, you should delay no longer; he is rich; he is a duke; but he is more than devout, he is religious! I am sure, therefore, that you have been faithful to me, thanks to his scruples. You cannot imagine how urgently necessary it is that you should compromise him with himself and with God; short of that you will never bring him to the point.'—'Is this a dream?' said she, pushing her hair from her forehead, fifteen years before Malibran, with the gesture which Malibran has made so famous.—'Come, do not be childish, my angel,' said I, trying to take her hands; but she folded them before her with a little prudish and indignant mien.—'Marry him, you have my permission,' said I, replying to this gesture by using the formal *vous* instead of *tu*. 'Nay, better, I beg you to do so.'—'But,' cried she, falling at my knees, 'there is some horrible mistake; I love no one in the world but you; you may demand any proofs you please.'—'Rise, my dear,' said I, 'and do me the honor of being truthful.'—'As before God.'—'Do you doubt my love?'—'No.'—'Nor my fidelity?'—'No.'—'Well, I have committed the greatest crime,' I went on. 'I have doubted your love and your fidelity. Between two intoxications I looked calmly about me.'—'Calmly!' sighed she. 'That is enough, Henri; you no longer love me.'

"She had at once found, you perceive, a loophole for escape. In scenes like these an adverb is dangerous. But, happily, curiosity made her add: 'And what did you see? Have I ever spoken of the Duke excepting in public? Have

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you detected in my eyes——?'—'No,' said I, 'but in his. And you have eight times made me go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin to see you listening to the same mass as he.'—'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'then I have made you jealous!'—'Oh! I only wish I could be!' said I, admiring the pliancy of her quick intelligence, and these acrobatic feats which can only be successful in the eyes of the blind. 'But by dint of going to church I have become very incredulous. On the day of my first cold, and your first treachery, when you thought I was in bed, you received the Duke, and you told me you had seen no one.'—'Do you know that your conduct is infamous?'—'In what respect? I consider your marriage to the Duke an excellent arrangement; he gives you a great name, the only rank that suits you, a brilliant and distinguished position. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should be doing you a wrong if I placed any obstacle in the way of this prospect, this distinguished life, this splendid alliance. Ah! Charlotte, some day you will do me justice by discovering how unlike my character is to that of other young men. You would have been compelled to deceive me; yes, you would have found it very difficult to break with me, for he watches you. It is time that we should part, for the Duke is rigidly virtuous. You must turn prude; I advise you to do so. The Duke is vain; he will be proud of his wife.'—'Oh!' cried she, bursting into tears, 'Henri, if only you had spoken! Yes, if you had chosen'—it was I who was to blame, you understand—'we would have gone to live all our days in a corner, married, happy, and defied the world.'—'Well, it is too late now,' said I, kissing her hands, and putting on a victimized air.—'Good God! But I can undo it all!' said she.—'No, you have gone too far with the Duke. I ought indeed to go a journey to part us more effectually. We should both have reason to fear our own affection——'—'Henri, do you think the Duke has any suspicions?' I was still 'Henri,' but the *tu* was lost for ever.—'I do not think so,' I replied, assuming the manner of a friend; 'but be as devout as possible, reconcile yourself to God, for the Duke waits for proofs; he hesitates, you must bring him to the point.'

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"She rose, and walked twice round the boudoir in real or affected agitation; then she no doubt found an attitude and a look beseeming the new state of affairs, for she stopped in front of me, held out her hand, and said in a voice broken by emotion, 'Well, Henri, you are loyal, noble, and a charming man; I shall never forget you.'

"These were admirable tactics. She was bewitching in this transition of feeling, indispensable to the situation in which she wished to place herself in regard to me. I fell into the attitude, the manners, and the look of a man so deeply distressed, that I saw her too newly assumed dignity giving way; she looked at me, took my hand, drew me along almost, threw me on to the sofa, but quite gently, and said after a moment's silence, 'I am dreadfully unhappy, my dear fellow. Do you love me?'—'Oh! yes.'—'Well, then, what will become of you?' "

At this point the women all looked at each other.

"Though I can still suffer when I recall her perfidy, I still laugh at her expression of entire conviction and sweet satisfaction that I must die, or at any rate sink into perpetual melancholy," de Marsay went on. "Oh! do not laugh yet!" he said to his listeners; "there is better to come. I looked at her very tenderly after a pause, and said to her, 'Yes, that is what I have been wondering.'—'Well, what will you do?'—'I asked myself that the day after my cold.'—'And——?' she asked with eager anxiety.—'And I have made advances to the little lady to whom I was supposed to be attached.'

"Charlotte started up from the sofa like a frightened doe, trembling like a leaf, gave me one of those looks in which women forego all their dignity, all their modesty, their refinement, and even their grace, the sparkling glitter of a hunted viper's eye when driven into a corner, and said, 'And I have loved this man! I have struggled! I have——' On this last thought, which I leave you to guess, she made the most impressive pause I ever heard.—'Good God!' she cried, 'how unhappy are we women! we never can be loved. To you there is nothing serious in the purest feelings. But never

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mind; when you cheat us you still are our dupes!'—'I see that plainly,' said I, with a stricken air; 'you have far too much wit in your anger for your heart to suffer from it.'—This modest epigram increased her rage; she found some tears of vexation. 'You disgust me with the world and with life,' she said; 'you snatch away all my illusions; you deprave my heart.'

"She said to me all that I had a right to say to her, and with a simple effrontery, an artless audacity, which would certainly have nailed any man but me on the spot.—'What is to become of us poor women in a state of society such as Louis XVIII.'s charter has made it?'—(Imagine how her words had run away from her.)—'Yes, indeed, we are born to suffer. In matters of passion we are always superior to you, and you are beneath all loyalty. There is no honesty in your hearts. To you love is a game in which you always cheat.'—'My dear,' said I, 'to take anything serious in society nowadays would be like making romantic love to an actress.'—'What a shameless betrayal! It was deliberately planned!'—'No, only a rational issue.'—'Good-bye, Monsieur de Marsay,' said she; 'you have deceived me horribly.'—'Surely,' I replied, taking up a submissive attitude, 'Madame la Duchesse will not remember Charlotte's grievances?'—'Certainly,' she answered bitterly.—'Then, in fact, you hate me?'—She bowed, and I said to myself, 'There is something still left!'

"The feeling she had when I parted from her allowed her to believe that she still had something to avenge. Well, my friends, I have carefully studied the lives of men who have had great success with women, but I do not believe that the Maréchal de Richelieu, or Lauzun, or Louis de Valois ever effected a more judicious retreat at the first attempt. As to my mind and heart, they were cast in a mould then and there, once for all, and the power of control I thus acquired over the thoughtless impulses which make us commit so many follies gained me the admirable presence of mind you all know."

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"How deeply I pity the second!" exclaimed the Baronne de Nucingen.

A scarcely perceptible smile on de Marsay's pale lips made Delphine de Nucingen color.

"How we do forget!" said the Baron de Nucingen.

The great banker's simplicity was so extremely droll, that his wife, who was de Marsay's "second," could not help laughing like every one else.

"You are all ready to condemn the woman," said Lady Dudley. "Well, I quite understand that she did not regard her marriage as an act of inconstancy. Men will never distinguish between constancy and fidelity.—I know the woman whose story Monsieur de Marsay has told us, and she is one of the last of your truly great ladies."

"Alas! my lady, you are right," replied de Marsay. "For very nearly fifty years we have been looking on at the progressive ruin of all social distinctions. We ought to have saved our women from this great wreck, but the Civil Code has swept its leveling influence over their heads. However terrible the words, they must be spoken: Duchesses are vanishing, and marquises too! As to the baronesses—I must apologize to Madame de Nucingen, who will become a countess when her husband is made a peer of France—baronesses have never succeeded in getting people to take them seriously."

"Aristocracy begins with the viscountess," said Blondet with a smile.

"Countesses will survive," said de Marsay. "An elegant woman will be more or less of a countess—a countess of the Empire or of yesterday, a countess of the old block, or, as they say in Italy, a countess by courtesy. But as to the great lady, she died out with the dignified splendor of the last century, with powder, patches, high-heeled slippers, and stiff bodices with a delta stomacher of bows. Duchesses in these days can pass through a door without any need to widen it for their hoops. The Empire saw the last of gowns with trains! I am still puzzled to understand how a sovereign who wished

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to see his drawing-room swept by ducal satin and velvet did not make indestructible laws. Napoleon never guessed the results of the Code he was so proud of. That man, by creating duchesses, founded the race of our 'ladies' of to-day —the indirect offspring of his legislation."

"It was logic, handled as a hammer by boys just out of school and by obscure journalists, which demolished the splendors of the social state," said the Comte de Vandenesse. "In these days every rogue who can hold his head straight in his collar, cover his manly bosom with half an ell of satin by way of a cuirass, display a brow where apocryphal genius gleams under curling locks, and strut in a pair of patent-leather pumps graced by silk socks which cost six francs, screws his eye-glass into one of his eye-sockets by puckering up his cheek, and whether he be an attorney's clerk, a contractor's son, or a banker's bastard, he stares impertinently at the prettiest duchess, appraises her as she walks downstairs, and says to his friend—dressed by Buisson, as we all are, and mounted in patent-leather like any duke himself—'There, my boy, that is a perfect lady.'"

"You have not known how to form a party," said Lord Dudley; "it will be a long time yet before you have a policy. You talk a great deal in France about organizing labor, and you have not yet organized property. So this is what happens: Any duke—and even in the time of Louis XVIII. and Charles X. there were some left who had two hundred thousand francs a year, a magnificent residence, and a sumptuous train of servants—well, such a duke could live like a great lord. The last of these great gentlemen in France was the Prince de Talleyrand.—This duke leaves four children, two of them girls. Granting that he has great luck in marrying them all well, each of these descendants will have but sixty or eighty thousand francs a year now; each is the father or mother of children, and consequently obliged to live with the strictest economy in a flat on the ground floor or first floor of a large house. Who knows if they may not even be hunting a fortune? Henceforth the eldest son's wife, a duchess

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in name only, has no carriage, no people, no opera-box, no time to herself. She has not her own rooms in the family mansion, nor her fortune, nor her pretty toys; she is buried in marriage as a wife in the Rue Saint-Denis is buried in trade; she buys socks for her dear little children, nurses them herself, and keeps an eye on her girls, whom she no longer sends to school at a convent. Thus your noblest dames have been turned into worthy brood-hens."

"Alas! it is true," said Joseph Bridau. "In our day we cannot show those beautiful flowers of womanhood which graced the golden ages of the French Monarchy. The great lady's fan is broken. A woman has nothing now to blush for; she need not slander or whisper, hide her face or reveal it. A fan is of no use now but for fanning herself. When once a thing is no more than what it is, it is too useful to be a form of luxury."

"Everything in France has aided and abetted the 'perfect lady,'" said Daniel d'Arthez. "The aristocracy has acknowledged her by retreating to the recesses of its landed estates, where it has hidden itself to die—emigrating inland before the march of ideas, as of old to foreign lands before that of the masses. The women who could have founded European *salons,* could have guided opinion and turned it inside out like a glove, could have ruled the world by ruling the men of art or of intellect who ought to have ruled it, have committed the blunder of abandoning their ground; they were ashamed of having to fight against the citizen class drunk with power, and rushing out on to the stage of the world, there to be cut to pieces perhaps by the barbarians who are at its heels. Hence, where the middle class insist on seeing princesses, these are really only ladylike young women. In these days princes can find no great ladies whom they may compromise; they cannot even confer honor on a woman taken up at random. The Duc de Bourbon was the last prince to avail himself of this privilege."

"And God alone knows how dearly he paid for it," said Lord Dudley.

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"Nowadays princes have lady-like wives, obliged to share their opera-box with other ladies; royal favor could not raise them higher by a hair's-breadth; they glide unremarkable between the waters of the citizen class and those of the nobility —not altogether noble nor altogether *bourgeoises,*" said the Marquise de Rochegude acridly.

"The press has fallen heir to the Woman," exclaimed Rastignac. "She no longer has the quality of a spoken *feuilleton*—delightful calumnies graced by elegant language. We read *feuilletons* written in a dialect which changes every three years, society papers about as mirthful as an undertaker's mute, and as light as the lead of their type. French conversation is carried on from one end of the country to the other in a revolutionary jargon, through long columns of type printed in old mansions where a press groans in the place where formerly elegant company used to meet."

"The knell of the highest society is tolling," said a Russian Prince. "Do you hear it? And the first stroke is your modern word *lady.*"

"You are right, Prince," said de Marsay. "The 'perfect lady,' issuing from the ranks of the nobility, or sprouting from the citizen class, and the product of every soil, even of the provinces is the expression of these times, a last remaining embodiment of good taste, grace, wit, and distinction, all combined, but dwarfed. We shall see no more great ladies in France, but there will be 'ladies' for a long time, elected by public opinion to form an upper chamber of women, and who will be among the fair sex what a 'gentleman' is in England.

"And that they call progress!" exclaimed Mademoiselle des Touches. "I should like to know where the progress lies?"

"Why, in this," said Madame de Nucingen. "Formerly a woman might have the voice of a fish-seller, the walk of a grenadier, the face of an impudent courtesan, her hair too high on her forehead, a large foot, a thick hand—she was a great lady in spite of it all; but in these days, even if she

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were a Montmorency—if a Montmorency would ever be such a creature—she would not be a lady."

"But what do you mean by a 'perfect lady'?" asked Count Adam Laginski.

"She is a modern product, a deplorable triumph of the elective system as applied to the fair sex," said the Minister. "Every revolution has a word of its own which epitomizes and depicts it."

"You are right," said the Russian, who had come to make a literary reputation in Paris. "The explanation of certain words added from time to time to your beautiful language would make a magnificent history. *Organize,* for instance, is the word of the Empire, and sums up Napoleon completely."

"But all that does not explain what is meant by a lady!" the young Pole exclaimed, with some impatience.

"Well, I will tell you," said Émile Blondet to Count Adam. "One fine morning you go for a saunter in Paris. It is past two, but five has not yet struck. You see a woman coming towards you; your first glance at her is like the preface to a good book, it leads you to expect a world of elegance and refinement. Like a botanist over hill and dale in his pursuit of plants, among the vulgarities of Paris life you have at last found a rare flower. This woman is attended by two very distinguished-looking men, of whom one, at any rate, wears an order; or else a servant out of livery follows her at a distance of ten yards. She displays no gaudy colors, no open-worked stockings, no over-elaborate waist-buckle, no embroidered frills to her drawers fussing round her ankles. You will see that she is shod with prunella shoes, with sandals crossed over extremely fine cotton stockings, or plain gray silk stockings; or perhaps she wears boots of the most exquisite simplicity. You notice that her gown is made of a neat and inexpensive material, but made in a way that surprises more than one woman of the middle class; it is almost always a long pelisse, with bows to fasten it, and neatly bound with fine cord or an imperceptible braid. The Un-

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known has a way of her own in wrapping herself in her shawl or mantilla; she knows how to draw it round her from her hips to her neck, outlining a carapace, as it were, which would make an ordinary woman look like a turtle, but which in her sets off the most beautiful forms while concealing them. How does she do it? This secret she keeps, though unguarded by any patent.

"As she walks she gives herself a little concentric and harmonious twist, which makes her supple or dangerous slenderness writhe under the stuff, as a snake does under the green gauze of trembling grass. Is it to an angel or a devil that she owes the graceful undulation which plays under her long black silk cape, stirs its lace frill, sheds an airy balm, and what I should like to call the breeze of a Parisienne? You may recognize over her arms, round her waist, about her throat, a science of drapery recalling the antique Mnemosyne.

"Oh! how thoroughly she understands the *cut* of her gait—forgive the expression. Study the way she puts her foot forward, moulding her skirt with such a decent preciseness that the passer-by is filled with admiration, mingled with desire, but subdued by deep respect. When an Englishwoman attempts this step, she looks like a grenadier marching forward to attack a redoubt. The women of Paris have a genius for walking. The municipality really owed them asphalt footwalks.

"Our Unknown jostles no one. If she wants to pass, she waits with proud humility till some one makes way. The distinction peculiar to a well-bred woman betrays itself, especially in the way she holds her shawl or cloak crossed over her bosom. Even as she walks she has a little air of serene dignity, like Raphael's Madonnas in their frames. Her aspect, at once quiet and disdainful, makes the most insolent dandy step aside for her.

"Her bonnet, remarkable for its simplicity, is trimmed with crisp ribbons; there may be flowers in it, but the cleverest of such women wear only bows. Feathers demand a carriage; flowers are too showy. Beneath it you see the fresh unworn

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face of a woman who, without conceit, is sure of herself; who looks at nothing, and sees everything; whose vanity, satiated by being constantly gratified, stamps her face with an indifference which piques your curiosity. She knows that she is looked at, she knows that everybody, even women, turn round to see her again. And she threads her way through Paris like a gossamer, spotless and pure.

"This delightful species affects the hottest latitudes, the cleanest longitudes of Paris; you will meet her between the 10th and 110th Arcade of the Rue de Rivoli; along the line of the Boulevards from the equator of the Passage des Panoramas, where the products of India flourish, where the warmest creations of industry are displayed, to the Cape of the Madeleine; in the least muddy districts of the citizen quarters, between No. 30 and No. 130 of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. During the winter, she haunts the terrace of the Feuillants, but not the asphalt pavement that lies parallel. According to the weather, she may be seen flying in the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées, which is bounded on the east by the Place Louis XV., on the west by the Avenue de Marigny, to the south by the road, to the north by the gardens of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Never is this pretty variety of woman to be seen in the hyperborean regions of the Rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtschatka of miry, narrow, commercial streets; never anywhere in bad weather. These flowers of Paris, blooming only in Oriental weather, perfume the highways; and after five o'clock fold up like morning-glory flowers. The women you will see later, looking a little like them, trying to ape them, are would-be ladies; while the fair Unknown, your Beatrice of a day, is a 'perfect lady.'

"It is not very easy for a foreigner, my dear Count, to recognize the differences by which the observer *emeritus* distinguishes them—women are such consummate actresses; but they are glaring in the eyes of Parisians: hooks ill fastened, strings showing loops of rusty-white tape through a gaping slit in the back, rubbed shoe-leather, ironed bonnet-strings, an over-full skirt, an over-tight waist. You will

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see a certain effort in the intentional droop of the eyelid. There is something conventional in the attitude.

"As to the *bourgeoise,* the citizen womankind, she cannot possibly be mistaken for the lady; she is an admirable foil to her, she accounts for the spell cast over you by the Unknown. She is bustling, and goes out in all weathers, trots about, comes, goes, gazes, does not know whether she will or will not go into a shop. Where the lady knows just what she wants and what she is doing, the townswoman is undecided, tucks up her skirts to cross a gutter, dragging a child by the hand, which compels her to look out for the vehicles; she is a mother in public, and talks to her daughter; she carries money in her bag, and has open-work stockings on her feet; in winter, she wears a boa over her fur cloak; in summer, a shawl and a scarf; she is accomplished in the redundancies of dress.

"You will meet the fair Unknown again at the Italiens, at the Opera, at a ball. She will then appear under such a different aspect that you would think them two beings devoid of any analogy. The woman has emerged from those mysterious garments like a butterfly from its silky cocoon. She serves up, like some rare dainty, to your ravished eyes, the forms which her bodice scarcely revealed in the morning. At the theatre she never mounts higher than the second tier, excepting at the Italiens. You can there watch at your leisure the studied deliberateness of her movements. The enchanting deceiver plays off all the little political artifices of her sex so naturally as to exclude all idea of art or premeditation. If she has a royally beautiful hand, the most perspicacious beholder will believe that it is absolutely necessary that she should twist, or refix, or push aside the ringlet or curl she plays with. If she has some dignity of profile, you will be persuaded that she is giving irony or grace to what she says to her neighbor, sitting in such a position as to produce the magical effect of the 'lost profile,' so dear to great painters, by which the cheek catches the high light, the nose is shown in clear outline, the nostrils are transparently rosy, the forehead

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squarely modeled, the eye has its spangle of fire, but fixed on space, and the white roundness of the chin is accentuated by a line of light. If she has a pretty foot, she will throw herself on a sofa with the coquettish grace of a cat in the sunshine, her feet outstretched without your feeling that her attitude is anything but the most charming model ever given to a sculptor by lassitude.

"Only the perfect lady is quite at her ease in full dress; nothing inconveniences her. You will never see her, like the woman of the citizen class, pulling up a refractory shoulder-strap, or pushing down a rebellious whalebone, or looking whether her tucker is doing its office of faithful guardian to two treasures of dazzling whiteness, or glancing in the mirrors to see if her head-dress is keeping its place. Her toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time to study herself, to learn what becomes her, for she has long known what does not suit her. You will not find her as you go out; she vanishes before the end of the play. If by chance she is to be seen, calm and stately, on the stairs, she is experiencing some violent emotion; she has to bestow a glance, to receive a promise. Perhaps she goes down so slowly on purpose to gratify the vanity of a slave whom she sometimes obeys. If your meeting takes place at a ball or an evening party, you will gather the honey, natural or affected, of her insinuating voice; her empty words will enchant you, and she will know how to give them the value of thought by her inimitable bearing."

"To be such a woman, is it not necessary to be very clever?" asked the Polish Count.

"It is necessary to have great taste," replied the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And in France taste is more than cleverness," said the Russian.

"This woman's cleverness is the triumph of a purely plastic art," Blondet went on. "You will not know what she said, but you will be fascinated. She will toss her head, or gently shrug her white shoulders; she will gild an insignificant

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speech with a charming pout and smile; or throw a Voltairean epigram into an 'Indeed!' an 'Ah!' a 'What then!' A jerk of her head will be her most pertinent form of questioning; she will give meaning to the movement by which she twirls a vinaigrette hanging to her finger by a ring. She gets an artificial grandeur out of superlative trivialities; she simply drops her hand impressively, letting it fall over the arm of her chair as dewdrops hang on the cup of a flower, and all is said—she has pronounced judgment beyond appeal, to the apprehension of the most obtuse. She knows how to listen to you; she gives you the opportunity of shining, and—I ask your modesty—those moments are rare?"

The candid simplicity of the young Pole, to whom Blondet spoke, made all the party shout with laughter.

"Now, you will not talk for half-an-hour with a *bourgeoise* without her alluding to her husband in one way or another," Blondet went on with unperturbed gravity; "whereas, even if you know that your lady is married, she will have the delicacy to conceal her husband so effectually that it will need the enterprise of Christopher Columbus to discover him. Often you will fail in the attempt single-handed. If you have had no opportunity of inquiring, towards the end of the evening you detect her gazing fixedly at a middle-aged man wearing a decoration, who bows and goes out. She has ordered her carriage, and goes.

"You are not the rose, but you have been with the rose, and you go to bed under the golden canopy of a delicious dream, which will last perhaps after Sleep, with his heavy finger, has opened the ivory gates of the temple of dreams.

"The lady, when she is at home, sees no one before four; she is shrewd enough always to keep you waiting. In her house you will find everything in good taste; her luxury is for hourly use, and duly renewed; you will see nothing under glass shades, no rags of wrappings hanging about, and looking like a pantry. You will find the staircase warmed. Flowers on all sides will charm your sight—flowers, the only gift she accepts, and those only from certain people, for nosegays

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live but a day; they give pleasure, and must be replaced; to her they are, as in the East, a symbol and a promise. The costly toys of fashion lie about, but not so as to suggest a museum or a curiosity shop. You will find her sitting by the fire in a low chair, from which she will not rise to greet you. Her talk will not now be what it was at the ball; there she was our creditor; in her own home she owes you the pleasure of her wit. These are the shades of which the lady is a marvelous mistress. What she likes in you is a man to swell her circle, an object for the cares and attentions which such women are now happy to bestow. Therefore, to attract you to her drawing-room, she will be bewitchingly charming. This especially is where you feel how isolated women are nowadays, and why they want a little world of their own, to which they may seem a constellation. Conversation is impossible without generalities."

"Yes," said de Marsay, "you have truly hit the fault of our age. The epigram—a volume in a word—no longer strikes, as it did in the eighteenth century, at persons or at things, but at squalid events, and it dies in a day."

"Hence," said Blondet, "the intelligence of the lady, if she has any, consists in casting doubts on everything, while the *bourgeoise* uses her to affirm everything. Here lies the great difference between the two women; the townswoman is certainly virtuous; the lady does not know yet whether she is, or whether she always will be; she hesitates and struggles where the other refuses point-blank and falls full length. This hesitancy in everything is one of the last graces left to her by our horrible times. She rarely goes to church, but she will talk to you of religion; and if you have the good taste to affect Free-thought, she will try to convert you, for you will have opened a way for the stereotyped phrases, the head-shaking and gestures understood by all these women: 'For shame! I thought you had too much sense to attack religion. Society is tottering, and you deprive it of its support. Why, religion at this moment means you and me; it is property, and the future of our children! Ah! let us

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not be selfish! Individualism is the disease of the age, and religion is the only remedy; it unites families which your laws put asunder,' and so forth. Then she plunges into some neo-Christian speech sprinkled with political notions which is neither Catholic nor Protestant—but moral? Oh! deuced moral!—in which you may recognize a fag end of every material woven by modern doctrines, at loggerheads together."

The women could not help laughing at the airs by which Blondet illustrated his satire.

"This explanation, dear Count Adam," said Blondet, turning to the Pole, "will have proved to you that the 'perfect lady' represents the intellectual no less than the political muddle, just as she is surrounded by the showy and not very lasting products of an industry which is always aiming at destroying its work in order to replace it by something else. When you leave her you say to yourself: She certainly has superior ideas! And you believe it all the more because she will have sounded your heart with a delicate touch, and have asked you your secrets; she affects ignorance, to learn everything; there are some things she never knows, not even when she knows them. You alone will be uneasy, you will know nothing of the state of her heart. The great ladies of old flaunted their love-affairs, with newspapers and advertisements; in these days the lady has her little passion neatly ruled like a sheet of music with its crotchets and quavers and minims, its rests, its pauses, its sharps to sign the key. A mere weak woman, she is anxious not to compromise her love, or her husband, or the future of her children. Name, position, and fortune are no longer flags so respected as to protect all kinds of merchandise on board. The whole aristocracy no longer advances in a body to screen the lady. She has not, like the great lady of the past, the demeanor of lofty antagonism; she can crush nothing under foot, it is she who would be crushed. Thus she is apt at Jesuitical *mezzo termine,* she is a creature of equivocal compromises, of guarded proprieties, of anonymous passions steered between

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two reef-bound shores. She is as much afraid of her servants as an Englishwoman who lives in dread of a trial in the divorce-court. This woman—so free at a ball, so attractive out walking—is a slave at home; she is never independent but in perfect privacy, or theoretically. She must preserve herself in her position as a lady. This is her task.

"For in our day a woman repudiated by her husband, reduced to a meagre allowance, with no carriage, no luxury, no opera-box, none of the divine accessories of the toilet, is no longer a wife, a maid, or a townswoman; she is adrift, and becomes a chattel. The Carmelites will not receive a married woman; it would be bigamy. Would her lover still have anything to say to her? That is the question. Thus your perfect lady may perhaps give occasion to calumny, never to slander."

"It is all horribly true," said the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And so," said Blondet, "our 'perfect lady' lives between English hypocrisy and the delightful frankness of the eighteenth century—a bastard system, symptomatic of an age in which nothing that grows up is at all like the thing that has vanished, in which transition leads nowhere, everything is a matter of degree; all the great figures shrink into the background, and distinction is purely personal. I am fully convinced that it is impossible for a woman, even if she were born close to a throne, to acquire before the age of five-and-twenty the encyclopædic knowledge of trifles, the practice of manœuvring, the important small things, the musical tones and harmony of coloring, the angelic bedevilments and innocent cunning, the speech and the silence, the seriousness and the banter, the wit and the obtuseness, the diplomacy and the ignorance which make up the perfect lady."

"And where, in accordance with the sketch you have drawn," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Émile Blondet, "would you class the female author? Is she a perfect lady, a woman *comme il faut*?"

"When she has no genius, she is a woman *comme il n'en faut pas*," Blondet replied, emphasizing the words with a

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stolen glance, which might make them seem praise frankly addressed to Camille Maupin. "This epigram is not mine, but Napoleon's," he added.

"You need not owe Napoleon any grudge on that score," said Canalis, with an emphatic tone and gesture. "It was one of his weaknesses to be jealous of literary genius—for he had his mean points. Who will ever explain, depict, or understand Napoleon? A man represented with his arms folded, and who did everything, who was the greatest force ever known, the most concentrated, the most mordant, the most acid of all forces; a singular genius who carried armed civilization in every direction without fixing it anywhere; a man who could do everything because he willed everything; a prodigious phenomenon of will, conquering an illness by a battle, and yet doomed to die of disease in bed after living in the midst of ball and bullets; a man with a code and a sword in his brain, word and deed; a clear-sighted spirit that foresaw everything but his own fall; a capricious politician who risked men by handfuls out of economy, and who spared three heads—those of Talleyrand, of Pozzo di Borgo, and of Metternich, diplomatists whose death would have saved the French Empire, and who seemed to him of greater weight than thousands of soldiers; a man to whom nature, as a rare privilege, had given a heart in a frame of bronze; mirthful and kind at midnight amid women, and next morning manipulating Europe as a young girl might amuse herself by splashing the water in her bath! Hypocritical and generous; loving tawdriness and simplicity; devoid of taste, but protecting the arts; and in spite of these antitheses, really great in everything by instinct or by temperament; Cæsar at five-and-twenty, Cromwell at thirty; and then, like my grocer buried in Père Lachaise, a good husband and a good father. In short, he improvised public works, empires, kings, codes, verses, a romance—and all with more range than precision. Did he not aim at making all Europe France? And after making us weigh on the earth in such a way as to change the laws of gravitation, he left us poorer than on the day when he

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first laid hands on us; while he, who had taken an empire by his name, lost his name on the frontier of his empire in a sea of blood and soldiers. A man all thought and all action, who comprehended Desaix and Fouché."

"All despotism and all justice at the right moments. The true king!" said de Marsay.

"Ah! vat a pleashre it is to dichest vile you talk," said Baron de Nucingen.

"But do you suppose that the treat we are giving you is a common one?" asked Joseph Bridau. "If you had to pay for the charms of conversation as you do for those of dancing or of music, your fortune would be inadequate! There is no second performance of the same flash of wit."

"And are we really so much deteriorated as these gentlemen think?" said the Princesse de Cadignan, addressing the women with a smile at once sceptical and ironical. "Because, in these days, under a régime which makes everything small, you prefer small dishes, small rooms, small pictures, small articles, small newspapers, small books, does that prove that women too have grown smaller? Why should the human heart change because you change your coat? In all ages the passions will remain the same. I know cases of beautiful devotion, of sublime sufferings, which lack the publicity—the glory, if you choose—which formerly gave lustre to the errors of some women. But though one may not have saved a King of France, one is not the less an Agnes Sorel. Do you believe that our dear Marquise d'Espard is not the peer of Madame Doublet, or Madame du Deffant, in whose rooms so much evil was spoken and done? Is not Taglioni a match for Camargo? or Malibran the equal of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If at this moment, through the fault of the Grocers who govern us, we have not a style of our own, had not the Empire its distinguishing stamp as the age of Louis XV. had, and was not its splendor fabulous? Have the sciences lost anything?"

"I am quite of your opinion, madame; the women of this

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age are truly great," replied the Comte de Vandenesse. "When posterity shall have followed us, will not Madame Récamier appear in proportions as fine as those of the most beautiful women of the past? We have made so much history that historians will be lacking! The age of Louis XIV. had but one Madame de Sévigné; we have a thousand now in Paris who certainly write better than she did, and who do not publish their letters. Whether the Frenchwoman be called 'perfect lady' or great lady, she will always be *the* woman among women.

"Émile Blondet has given us a picture of the fascinations of a woman of the day; but, at need, this creature who bridles or shows off, who chirps out the ideas of Mr. This and Mr. That, would be heroic. And it must be said, your faults, mesdames, are all the more poetical, because they must always and under all circumstances be surrounded by greater perils. I have seen much of the world, I have studied it perhaps too late; but in cases where the illegality of your feelings might be excused, I have always observed the effects of I know not what chance—which you may call Providence—inevitably overwhelming such as we consider light women."

"I hope," said Madame de Vandenesse, "that we can be great in other ways——"

"Oh, let the Comte de Vandenesse preach to us!" exclaimed Madame de Sérizy.

"With all the more reason because he has preached a great deal by example," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"On my honor!" said General de Montriveau, "in all the dramas—a word you are very fond of," he said, looking at Blondet—"in which the finger of God has been visible, the most frightful I ever knew was very near being by my act——"

"Well, tell us all about it!" cried Lady Barimore; "I love to shudder!"

"It is the taste of a virtuous woman," replied de Marsay, looking at Lord Dudley's lovely daughter.

"During the campaign of 1812," General de Montriveau

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began, "I was the involuntary cause of a terrible disaster which may be of use to you, Doctor Bianchon," turning to me, "since, while devoting yourself to the human body, you concern yourself a good deal with the mind; it may tend to solve some of the problems of the will.

"I was going through my second campaign; I enjoyed danger, and laughed at everything, like the young and foolish lieutenant of artillery that I was. When we reached the Beresina, the army had, as you know, lost all discipline, and had forgotten military obedience. It was a medley of men of all nations, instinctively making their way from north to south. The soldiers would drive a general in rags and bare-foot away from their fire if he brought neither wood nor victuals. After the passage of this famous river disorder did not diminish. I had come quietly and alone, without food, out of the marshes of Zembin, and was wandering in search of a house where I might be taken in. Finding none, or driven away from those I came across, happily towards evening I perceived a wretched little Polish farm, of which nothing can give you any idea unless you have seen the wooden houses of Lower Normandy, or the poorest farm-buildings of la Beauce. These dwellings consist of a single room, with one end divided off by a wooden partition, the smaller division serving as a store-room for forage.

"In the darkness of twilight I could just see a faint smoke rising above this house. Hoping to find there some comrades more compassionate than those I had hitherto addressed, I boldly walked as far as the farm. On going in, I found the table laid. Several officers, and with them a woman—a common sight enough—were eating potatoes, some horse-flesh broiled over the charcoal, and some frozen beetroots. I recognized among the company two or three artillery captains of the regiment in which I had first served. I was welcomed with a shout of acclamation, which would have amazed me greatly on the other side of the Beresina; but at this moment the cold was less intense; my fellow-officers were resting, they were warm, they had food, and the room, strewn

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with trusses of straw, gave the promise of a delightful night. We did not ask for so much in those days. My comrades could be philanthropists *gratis*—one of the commonest ways of being philanthropic. I sat down to eat on one of the bundles of straw.

"At the end of the table, by the side of the door opening into the smaller room full of straw and hay, sat my old colonel, one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw among all the mixed collection of men it has been my lot to meet. He was an Italian. Now, whenever human nature is truly fine in the lands of the South, it is really sublime. I do not know whether you have ever observed the extreme fairness of Italians when they are fair. It is exquisite, especially under an artificial light. When I read the fantastical portrait of Colonel Oudet sketched by Charles Nodier, I found my own sensations in every one of his elegant phrases. Italian, then, as were most of the officers of his regiment, which had, in fact, been borrowed by the Emperor from Eugène's army, my colonel was a tall man, at least eight or nine inches above the standard, and admirably proportioned—a little stout perhaps, but prodigiously powerful, active, and clean-limbed as a greyhound. His black hair in abundant curls showed up his complexion, as white as a woman's; he had small hands, a shapely foot, a pleasant mouth, and an aquiline nose delicately formed, of which the tip used to become naturally pinched and white whenever he was angry, as happened often. His irascibility was so far beyond belief that I will tell you nothing about it; you will have the opportunity of judging of it. No one could be calm in his presence. I alone, perhaps, was not afraid of him; he had indeed taken such a singular fancy to me that he thought everything I did right. When he was in a rage his brow was knit and the muscles of the middle of his forehead set in a delta, or, to be more explicit, in Redgauntlet's horseshoe. This mark was, perhaps, even more terrifying than the magnetic flashes of his blue eyes. His whole frame quivered, and his strength, great as it was in his normal state, became almost unbounded.

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"He spoke with a strong guttural roll. His voice, at least as powerful as that of Charles Nodier's Oudet, threw an incredible fulness of tone into the syllable or the consonant in which this burr was sounded. Though this faulty pronunciation was at times a grace, when commanding his men, or when he was excited, you cannot imagine, unless you had heard it, what force was expressed by this accent, which at Paris is so common. When the Colonel was quiescent, his blue eyes were angelically sweet, and his smooth brow had a most charming expression. On parade, or with the army of Italy, not a man could compare with him. Indeed, d'Orsay himself, the handsome d'Orsay, was eclipsed by our colonel on the occasion of the last review held by Napoleon before the invasion of Russia.

"Everything was in contrasts in this exceptional man. Passion lives on contrast. Hence you need not ask whether he exerted over women the irresistible influences to which our nature yields"—and the general looked at the Princesse de Cadignan—"as vitreous matter is moulded under the pipe of the glass-blower; still, by a singular fatality—an observer might perhaps explain the phenomenon—the Colonel was not a lady-killer, or was indifferent to such successes.

"To give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in a few words what I once saw him do in a paroxysm of fury. We were dragging our guns up a very narrow road, bordered by a somewhat high slope on one side, and by thickets on the other. When we were half-way up we met another regiment of artillery, its colonel marching at the head. This colonel wanted to make the captain who was at the head of our foremost battery back down again. The captain, of course, refused; but the colonel of the other regiment signed to his foremost battery to advance, and in spite of the care the driver took to keep among the scrub, the wheel of the first gun struck our captain's right leg and broke it, throwing him over on the near side of his horse. All this was the work of a moment. Our Colonel, who was but a little way off, guessed that there was a quarrel; he galloped up, riding among the

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guns at the risk of falling with his horse's four feet in the air, and reached the spot, face to face with the other colonel, at the very moment when the captain fell, calling out 'Help!' No, our Italian colonel was no longer human! Foam like the froth of champagne rose to his lips; he roared inarticulately like a lion. Incapable of uttering a word, or even a cry, he made a terrific signal to his antagonist, pointing to the wood and drawing his sword. The two colonels went aside. In two seconds we saw our Colonel's opponent stretched on the ground, his skull split in two. The soldiers of his regiment backed—yes, by heaven, and pretty quickly too.

"The captain, who had been so nearly crushed, and who lay yelping in the puddle where the gun carriage had thrown him, had an Italian wife, a beautiful Sicilian of Messina, who was not indifferent to our Colonel. This circumstance had aggravated his rage. He was pledged to protect the husband, bound to defend him as he would have defended the woman herself.

"Now, in the hovel beyond Zembin, where I was so well received, this captain was sitting opposite to me, and his wife was at the other end of the table, facing the Colonel. This Sicilian was a little woman named Rosina, very dark, but with all the fire of the Southern sun in her black almond-shaped eyes. At this moment she was deplorably thin; her face was covered with dust, like fruit exposed to the drought of a highroad. Scarcely clothed in rags, exhausted by marches, her hair in disorder, and clinging together under a piece of a shawl tied close over her head, still she had the graces of a woman; her movements were engaging, her small rosy mouth and white teeth, the outline of her features and figure, charms which misery, cold, and neglect had not altogether defaced, still suggested love to any man who could think of a woman. Rosina had one of those frames which are fragile in appearance, but wiry and full of spring. Her husband, a gentleman of Piedmont, had a face expressive of ironical simplicity, if it is allowable to ally the two words.

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Brave and well informed, he seemed to know nothing of the connection which had subsisted between his wife and the Colonel for three years past. I ascribed this unconcern to Italian manners, or to some domestic secret; yet there was in the man's countenance one feature which always filled me with involuntary distrust. His under lip, which was thin and very restless, turned down at the corners instead of turning up, and this, as I thought, betrayed a streak of cruelty in a character which seemed so phlegmatic and indolent.

"As you may suppose the conversation was not very sparkling when I went in. My weary comrades ate in silence; of course, they asked me some questions, and we related our misadventures, mingled with reflections on the campaign, the generals, their mistakes, the Russians, and the cold. A minute after my arrival the colonel, having finished his meagre meal, wiped his moustache, bid us good-night, shot a black look at the Italian woman, saying, 'Rosina?' and then, without waiting for a reply, went into the little barn full of hay, to bed. The meaning of the Colonel's utterance was self-evident. The young wife replied by an indescribable gesture, expressing all the annoyance she could not but feel at seeing her thralldom thus flaunted without human decency, and the offence to her dignity as a woman, and to her husband. But there was, too, in the rigid setting of her features and the tight knitting of her brows a sort of presentiment; perhaps she foresaw her fate. Rosina remained quietly in her place.

"A minute later, and apparently when the Colonel was snug in his couch of straw or hay, he repeated, 'Rosina?'

"The tone of this second call was even more brutally questioning than the first. The Colonel's strong burr, and the length which the Italian language allows to be given to vowels and the final syllable, concentrated all the man's despotism, impatience, and strength of will. Rosina turned pale, but she rose, passed behind us, and went to the Colonel.

"All the party sat in utter silence; I, unluckily, after

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looking at them all, began to laugh, and then they all laughed too.—'*Tu ridi?*—you laugh?' said the husband.

"'On my honor, old comrade,' said I, becoming serious again, 'I confess that I was wrong; I ask your pardon a thousand times, and if you are not satisfied by my apologies I am ready to give you satisfaction.'

"'Oh! it is not you who are wrong, it is I!' he replied coldly.

"Thereupon we all lay down in the room, and before long all were sound asleep.

"Next morning each one, without rousing his neighbor or seeking companionship, set out again on his way, with that selfishness which made our rout one of the most horrible dramas of self-seeking, melancholy, and horror which ever was enacted under heaven. Nevertheless, at about seven or eight hundred paces from our shelter we, most of us, met again and walked on together, like geese led in flocks by a child's wilful tyranny. The same necessity urged us all.

"Having reached a knoll where we could still see the farmhouse where we had spent the night, we heard sounds resembling the roar of lions in the desert, the bellowing of bulls—no, it was a noise which can be compared to no known cry. And yet, mingling with this horrible and ominous roar, we could hear a woman's feeble scream. We all looked round, seized by I know not what impulse of terror; we no longer saw the house, but a huge bonfire. The farmhouse had been barricaded, and was in flames. Swirls of smoke borne on the wind brought us hoarse cries and an indescribable pungent smell. A few yards behind, the captain was quietly approaching to join our caravan; we gazed at him in silence, for no one dared question him; but he, understanding our curiosity, pointed to his breast with the forefinger of his right hand, and, waving the left in the direction of the fire, he said, '*Son'io.*'

"We all walked on without saying a word to him."

"There is nothing more terrible than the revolt of a sheep," said de Marsay.

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"It would be frightful to let us leave with this horrible picture in our memory," said Madame de Montcornet. "I shall dream of it——"

"And what was the punishment of Monsieur de Marsay's 'First'?" said Lord Dudley, smiling.

"When the English are in jest, their foils have the buttons on," said Blondet.

"Monsieur Bianchon can tell us, for he saw her dying," replied de Marsay, turning to me.

"Yes," said I; "and her end was one of the most beautiful I ever saw. The Duke and I had spent the night by the dying woman's pillow; pulmonary consumption, in the last stage, left no hope; she had taken the sacrament the day before. The Duke had fallen asleep. The Duchess, waking at about four in the morning, signed to me in the most touching way, with a friendly smile, to bid me leave him to rest, and she meanwhile was about to die. She had become incredibly thin, but her face had preserved its really sublime outline and features. Her pallor made her skin look like porcelain with a light within. Her bright eyes and color contrasted with this languidly elegant complexion, and her countenance was full of expressive calm. She seemed to pity the Duke, and the feeling had its origin in a lofty tenderness which, as death approached, seemed to know no bounds. The silence was absolute. The room, softly lighted by a lamp, looked like every sickroom at the hour of death.

"At this moment the clock struck. The Duke awoke, and was in despair at having fallen asleep. I did not see the gesture of impatience by which he manifested the regret he felt at having lost sight of his wife for a few of the last minutes vouchsafed to him; but it is quite certain that any one but the dying woman might have misunderstood it. A busy statesman, always thinking of the interests of France, the Duke had a thousand odd ways on the surface, such as often lead to a man of genius being mistaken for a madman, and of which the explanation lies in the exquisiteness and exacting needs of their intellect. He came to seat himself

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in an armchair by his wife's side, and looked fixedly at her. The dying woman put her hand out a little way, took her husband's and clasped it feebly; and in a low but agitated voice she said, 'My poor dear, who is left to understand you now?' Then she died, looking at him."

"The stories the doctor tells us," said the Comte de Vandenesse, "always leave a deep impression."

"But a sweet one," said Mademoiselle des Touches, rising.

PARIS, *June* 1839–42.

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LA GRANDE BRETÊCHE

(Sequel to "Another Study of Woman.")

"AH! madame," replied the doctor, "I have some appalling stories in my collection. But each one has its proper hour in a conversation—you know the pretty jest recorded by Chamfort, and said to the Duc de Fronsac: 'Between your sally and the present moment lie ten bottles of champagne.'"

"But it is two in the morning, and the story of Rosina has prepared us," said the mistress of the house.

"Tell us, Monsieur Bianchon!" was the cry on every side.

The obliging doctor bowed, and silence reigned.

"At about a hundred paces from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loir," said he, "stands an old brown house, crowned with very high roofs, and so completely isolated that there is nothing near it, not even a fetid tannery or a squalid tavern, such as are commonly seen outside small towns. In front of this house is a garden down to the river, where the box shrubs, formerly clipped close to edge the walks, now straggle at their own will. A few willows, rooted in the stream, have grown up quickly like an enclosing fence, and half hide the house. The wild plants we call weeds have clothed the bank with their beautiful luxuriance. The fruit-trees, neglected for these ten years past, no longer bear a crop, and their suckers have formed a thicket. The espaliers are like a copse. The paths, once graveled, are overgrown with purslane; but, to be accurate, there is no trace of a path.

"Looking down from the hilltop, to which cling the ruins of the old castle of the Dukes of Vendôme, the only spot whence the eye can see into this enclosure, we think that at a time, difficult now to determine, this spot of earth must have been the joy of some country gentleman devoted to

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roses and tulips, in a word, to horticulture, but above all a lover of choice fruit. An arbor is visible, or rather the wreck of an arbor, and under it a table still stands not entirely destroyed by time. At the aspect of this garden that is no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces may be divined as we divine the history of a worthy tradesman when we read the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the mournful and tender impressions which seize the soul, on one of the walls there is a sundial graced with this homely Christian motto, *'Ultimam cogita.'*

"The roof of this house is dreadfully dilapidated; the outside shutters are always closed; the balconies are hung with swallows' nests; the doors are for ever shut. Straggling grasses have outlined the flagstones of the steps with green; the ironwork is rusty. Moon and sun, winter, summer, and snow have eaten into the wood, warped the boards, peeled off the paint. The dreary silence is broken only by birds and cats, polecats, rats, and mice, free to scamper round, and fight, and eat each other. An invisible hand has written over it all: 'Mystery.'

"If, prompted by curiosity, you go to look at this house from the street, you will see a large gate, with a round-arched top; the children have made many holes in it. I learned later that this door had been blocked for ten years. Through these irregular breaches you will see that the side towards the courtyard is in perfect harmony with the side towards the garden. The same ruin prevails. Tufts of weeds outline the paving-stones; the walls are scored by enormous cracks, and the blackened coping is laced with a thousand festoons of pellitory. The stone steps are disjointed; the bell-cord is rotten; the gutter-spouts broken. What fire from heaven can have fallen there? By what decree has salt been sown on this dwelling? Has God been mocked here? Or was France betrayed? These are the questions we ask ourselves. Reptiles crawl over it, but give no reply. This empty and deserted house is a vast enigma of which the answer is known to none.

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"It was formerly a little domain, held in fief, and is known as La Grande Bretêche. During my stay at Vendôme, where Despleins had left me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling became one of my keenest pleasures. Was it not far better than a ruin? Certain memories of indisputable authenticity attach themselves to a ruin; but this house, still standing, though being slowly destroyed by an avenging hand, contained a secret, an unrevealed thought. At the very least, it testified to a caprice. More than once in the evening I boarded the hedge, run wild, which surrounded the enclosure. I braved scratches, I got into this ownerless garden, this plot which was no longer public or private; I lingered there for hours gazing at the disorder. I would not, as the price of the story to which this strange scene no doubt was due, have asked a single question of any gossiping native. On that spot I wove delightful romances, and abandoned myself to little debauches of melancholy which enchanted me. If I had known the reason—perhaps quite commonplace—of this neglect, I should have lost the unwritten poetry which intoxicated me. To me this refuge represented the most various phases of human life, shadowed by misfortune; sometimes the calm of a cloister without the monks; sometimes the peace of the graveyard without the dead, who speak in the language of epitaphs; one day I saw in it the home of lepers; another, the house of the Atridæ; but, above all, I found there provincial life, with its contemplative ideas, its hour-glass existence. I often wept there, I never laughed.

"More than once I felt involuntary terrors as I heard overhead the dull hum of the wings of some hurrying wood-pigeon. The earth is dank; you must be on the watch for lizards, vipers, and frogs, wandering about with the wild freedom of nature; above all, you must have no fear of cold, for in a few moments you feel an icy cloak settle on your shoulders, like the Commendatore's hand on Don Giovanni's neck.

"One evening I felt a shudder; the wind had turned an

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old rusty weathercock, and the creaking sounded like a cry from the house, at the very moment when I was finishing a gloomy drama to account for this monumental embodiment of woe. I returned to my inn, lost in gloomy thoughts. When I had supped, the hostess came into my room with an air of mystery, and said, 'Monsieur, here is Monsieur Regnault.'

"'Who is Monsieur Regnault?'

"'What, sir, do you not know Monsieur Regnault?—Well, that's odd,' said she, leaving the room.

"On a sudden I saw a man appear, tall, slim, dressed in black, hat in hand, who came in like a ram ready to butt his opponent, showing a receding forehead, a small pointed head, and a colorless face of the hue of a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for an usher. The stranger wore an old coat, much worn at the seams; but he had a diamond in his shirt frill, and gold rings in his ears.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'whom have I the honor of addressing?'—He took a chair, placed himself in front of my fire, put his hat on my table, and answered while he rubbed his hands: 'Dear me, it is very cold.—Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.'

"I was encouraging myself by saying to myself, *'Il bondo cani!* Seek!'

"'I am,' he went on, 'notary at Vendôme."

"'I am delighted to hear it, monsieur,' I exclaimed. 'But I am not in a position to make a will for reasons best known to myself.'

"'One moment!' said he, holding up his hand as though to gain silence. 'Allow me, monsieur, allow me! I am informed that you sometimes go to walk in the garden of la Grande Bretêche.'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'One moment!' said he, repeating his gesture. 'That constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, as executor under the will of the late Comtesse de Merret, I come in her name to beg you to discontinue the practice. One moment! I am not

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a Turk, and do not wish to make a crime of it. And besides, you are free to be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to leave the finest mansion in Vendôme to fall into ruin. Nevertheless, monsieur, you must be a man of education, and you should know that the laws forbid, under heavy penalties, any trespass on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But, the state in which the place is left may be an excuse for your curiosity. For my part, I should be quite content to make you free to come and go in the house; but being bound to respect the will of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to beg that you will go into the garden no more. I myself, monsieur, since the will was read, have never set foot in the house, which, as I had the honor of informing you, is part of the estate of the late Madame de Merret. We have done nothing there but verify the number of doors and windows to assess the taxes I have to pay annually out of the funds left for that purpose by the late Madame de Merret. Ah! my dear sir, her will made a great commotion in the town.'

"The good man paused to blow his nose. I respected his volubility, perfectly understanding that the administration of Madame de Merret's estate had been the most important event of his life, his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. As I was forced to bid farewell to my beautiful reveries and romances, I was to reject learning the truth on official authority.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'would it be indiscreet if I were to ask you the reasons for such eccentricity?'

"At these words an expression, which revealed all the pleasure which men feel who are accustomed to ride a hobby, overspread the lawyer's countenance. He pulled up the collar of his shirt with an air, took out his snuffbox, opened it, and offered me a pinch; on my refusing, he took a large one. He was happy! A man who has no hobby does not know all the good to be got out of life. A hobby is the happy medium between a passion and a monomania. At this moment I understood the whole bearing of Sterne's charming passion,

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and had a perfect idea of the delight with which my uncle Toby, encouraged by Trim, bestrode his hobby-horse.

"'Monsieur,' said Monsieur Regnault, 'I was head-clerk in Monsieur Roguin's office, in Paris. A first-rate house, which you may have heard mentioned? No! An unfortunate bankruptcy made it famous.—Not having money enough to purchase a practice in Paris at the price to which they were run up in 1816, I came here and bought my predecessor's business. I had relations in Vendôme; among others, a wealthy aunt, who allowed me to marry her daughter.—Monsieur,' he went on after a little pause, 'three months after being licensed by the Keeper of the Seals, one evening, as I was going to bed—it was before my marriage—I was sent for by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to her Château of Merret. Her maid, a good girl, who is now a servant in this inn, was waiting at my door with the Countess' own carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to Paris to die two months before I came here. He came to a miserable end, flinging himself into every kind of dissipation. You understand?

"'On the day when he left, Madame la Comtesse had quitted la Grande Bretêche, having dismantled it. Some people even say that she had burnt all the furniture, the hangings—in short, all the chattels and furniture whatever used in furnishing the premises now let by the said M.—(Dear! what am I saying? I beg your pardon, I thought I was dictating a lease.)—In short, that she burnt everything in the meadow at Merret. Have you been to Merret, monsieur?—No,' said he, answering himself. 'Ah, it is a very fine place.'

"'For about three months previously,' he went on, with a jerk of his head, 'the Count and Countess had lived in a very eccentric way; they admitted no visitors; Madame lived on the ground-floor, and Monsieur on the first floor. When the Countess was left alone, she was never seen excepting at church. Subsequently, at home, at the château, she refused to see the friends, whether gentlemen or ladies, who went to

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call on her. She was already very much altered when she left la Grande Bretêche to go to Merret. That dear lady—I say dear lady, for it was she who gave me this diamond, but indeed I saw her but once—that kind lady was very ill; she had, no doubt, given up all hope, for she died without choosing to send for a doctor; indeed, many of our ladies fancied she was not quite right in her head. Well, sir, my curiosity was strangely excited by hearing that Madame de Merret had need of my services. Nor was I the only person who took an interest in the affair. That very night, though it was already late, all the town knew that I was going to Merret.

"'The waiting-woman replied but vaguely to the questions I asked her on the way; nevertheless, she told me that her mistress had received the Sacrament in the course of the day at the hands of the Curé of Merret, and seemed unlikely to live through the night. It was about eleven when I reached the château. I went up the great staircase. After crossing some large, lofty, dark rooms, diabolically cold and damp, I reached the state bedroom where the Countess lay. From the rumors that were current concerning this lady (monsieur, I should never end if I were to repeat all the tales that were told about her), I had imagined her a coquette. Imagine, then, that I had great difficulty in seeing her in the great bed where she was lying. To be sure, to light this enormous room, with old-fashioned heavy cornices, and so thick with dust that merely to see it was enough to make you sneeze, she had only an old Argand lamp. Ah! but you have not been to Merret. Well, the bed is one of those old-world beds, with a high tester hung with flowered chintz. A small table stood by the bed, on which I saw an "Imitation of Christ," which, by the way, I bought for my wife, as well as the lamp. There were also a deep armchair for her confidential maid, and two small chairs. There was no fire. That was all the furniture, not enough to fill ten lines in an inventory.

"'My dear sir, if you had seen, as I then saw, that vast

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room, papered and hung with brown, you would have felt yourself transported into a scene of a romance. It was icy, nay more, funereal,' and he lifted his hand with a theatrical gesture and paused.

"'By dint of seeking, as I approached the bed, at last I saw Madame de Merret, under the glimmer of the lamp, which fell on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and as narrow as two folded hands. The Countess had a lace cap showing abundant hair, but as white as linen thread. She was sitting up in bed, and seemed to keep upright with great difficulty. Her large black eyes, dimmed by fever, no doubt, and half-dead already, hardly moved under the bony arch of her eyebrows.—There,' he added, pointing to his own brow. 'Her forehead was clammy; her fleshless hands were like bones covered with soft skin; the veins and muscles were perfectly visible. She must have been very handsome; but at this moment I was startled into an indescribable emotion at the sight. Never, said those who wrapped her in her shroud, had any living creature been so emaciated and lived. In short, it was awful to behold! Sickness had so consumed that woman, that she was no more than a phantom. Her lips, which were pale violet, seemed to me not to move when she spoke to me.

"'Though my profession has familiarized me with such spectacles, by calling me not infrequently to the bedside of the dying to record their last wishes, I confess that families in tears and the agonies I have seen were as nothing in comparison with this lonely and silent woman in her vast château. I heard not the least sound, I did not perceive the movement which the sufferer's breathing ought to have given to the sheets that covered her, and I stood motionless, absorbed in looking at her in a sort of stupor. In fancy I am there still. At last her large eyes moved; she tried to raise her right hand, but it fell back on the bed, and she uttered these words, which came like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice: "I have waited for you with the greatest impatience." A bright flush rose to her cheeks. It was a great effort to her to speak.

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"'"Madame," I began. She signed to me to be silent. At that moment the old housekeeper rose and said in my ear, "Do not speak; Madame la Comtesse is not in a state to bear the slightest noise, and what you would say might agitate her."

"'I sat down. A few instants after, Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right hand, and slipped it, not without infinite difficulty, under the bolster; she then paused a moment. With a last effort she withdrew her hand; and when she brought out a sealed paper, drops of perspiration rolled from her brow. "I place my will in your hands—Oh! God! Oh!" and that was all. She clutched a crucifix that lay on the bed, lifted it hastily to her lips, and died.

"'The expression of her eyes still makes me shudder as I think of it. She must have suffered much! There was joy in her last glance, and it remained stamped on her dead eyes.

"'I brought away the will, and when it was opened I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She left the whole of her property to the hospital at Vendôme excepting a few legacies. But these were her instructions as relating to la Grande Bretêche: She ordered me to leave the place, for fifty years counting from the day of her death, in the state in which it might be at the time of her decease, forbidding any one, whoever he might be, to enter the apartments, prohibiting any repairs whatever, and even settling a salary to pay watchmen if it were needful to secure the absolute fulfilment of her intentions. At the expiration of that term, if the will of the testatrix has been duly carried out, the house is to become the property of my heirs, for, as you know, a notary cannot take a bequest. Otherwise la Grande Bretêche reverts to the heirs-at-law, but on condition of fulfilling certain conditions set forth in a codicil to the will, which is not to be opened till the expiration of the said term of fifty years. The will has not been disputed, so——' And without finishing his sentence, the lanky notary looked at me

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with an air of triumph; I made him quite happy by offering him my congratulations.

"'Monsieur,' I said in conclusion, 'you have so vividly impressed me that I fancy I see the dying woman whiter than her sheets; her glittering eyes frighten me; I shall dream of her to-night.—But you must have formed some idea as to the instructions contained in that extraordinary will.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, with comical reticence, 'I never allow myself to criticise the conduct of a person who honors me with the gift of a diamond.'

"However, I soon loosened the tongue of the discreet notary of Vendôme, who communicated to me, not without long digressions, the opinions of the deep politicians of both sexes whose judgments are law in Vendôme. But these opinions were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I was near falling asleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic history. The notary's ponderous voice and monotonous accent, accustomed no doubt to listen to himself and to make himself listened to by his clients or fellow-townsmen, were too much for my curiosity. Happily, he soon went away.

"'Ah, ha, monsieur,' said he on the stairs, 'a good many persons would be glad to live five-and-forty years longer; but —one moment!' and he laid the first finger of his right hand to his nostril with a cunning look, as much as to say, 'Mark my words!—To last as long as that—as long as that,' said he, 'you must not be past sixty now.'

"I closed my door, having been roused from my apathy by this last speech, which the notary thought very funny; then I sat down in my armchair, with my feet on the fire-dogs I had lost myself in a romance *à la* Radcliffe, constructed on the juridical base given me by Monsieur Regnault, when the door, opened by a woman's cautious hand, turned on the hinges. I saw my landlady come in, a buxom, florid dame, always good-humored, who had missed her calling in life. She was a Fleming, who ought to have seen the light in a picture by Teniers.

"'Well, monsieur,' said she, 'Monsieur Regnault has no doubt been giving you his history of la Grande Bretêche?'

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"'Yes, Madame Lepas.'

"'And what did he tell you?'

"I repeated in a few words the creepy and sinister story of Madame de Merret. At each sentence my hostess put her head forward, looking at me with an innkeeper's keen scrutiny, a happy compromise between the instinct of a police constable, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a dealer.

"'My good Madame Lepas,' said I as I ended, 'you seem to know more about it. Heh? If not, why have you come up to me?'

"'On my word, as an honest woman——'

"'Do not swear; your eyes are big with a secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret; what sort of man was he?'

"'Monsieur de Merret—well, you see he was a man you never could see the top of, he was so tall! A very good gentleman, from Picardy, and who had, as we say, his head close to his cap. He paid for everything down, so as never to have difficulties with any one. He was hot-tempered, you see! All our ladies liked him very much.'

"'Because he was hot-tempered?' I asked her.

"'Well, may be,' said she; 'and you may suppose, sir, that a man had to have something to show for a figurehead before he could marry Madame de Merret, who, without any reflection on others, was the handsomest and richest heiress in our parts. She had about twenty thousand francs a year. All the town was at the wedding; the bride was pretty and sweet-looking, quite a gem of a woman. Oh, they were a handsome couple in their day!'

"'And were they happy together?'

"'Hm, hm! so-so—so far as can be guessed, for, as you may suppose, we of the common sort were not hail-fellow-well-met with them.—Madame de Merret was a kind woman and very pleasant, who had no doubt sometimes to put up with her husband's tantrums. But though he was rather haughty, we were fond of him. After all, it was his place to behave so. When a man is a born nobleman, you see——'

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"'Still, there must have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to part so violently?'

"'I did not say there was any catastrophe, sir. I know nothing about it.'

"'Indeed. Well, now, I am sure you know everything.'

"'Well, sir, I will tell you the whole story.—When I saw Monsieur Regnault go up to see you, it struck me that he would speak to you about Madame de Merret as having to do with la Grande Bretêche. That put it into my head to ask your advice, sir, seeming to me that you are a man of good judgment and incapable of playing a poor woman like me false—for I never did any one a wrong, and yet I am tormented by my conscience. Up to now I have never dared to say a word to the people of these parts; they are all chattermags, with tongues like knives. And never till now, sir, have I had any traveler here who stayed so long in the inn as you have, and to whom I could tell the history of the fifteen thousand francs——'

"'My dear Madame Lepas, if there is anything in your story of a nature to compromise me,' I said, interrupting the flow of her words, 'I would not hear it for all the world.'

"'You need have no fears,' said she; 'you will see.'

"Her eagerness made me suspect that I was not the only person to whom my worthy landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be sole possessor, but I listened.

"'Monsieur,' said she, 'when the Emperor sent the Spaniards here, prisoners of war and others, I was required to lodge at the charge of the Government a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. Notwithstanding his parole, he had to show himself every day to the sub-prefect. He was a Spanish grandee—neither more nor less. He had a name in *os* and *dia,* something like Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name down in my books, and you may see it if you like. Ah! he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who are all ugly they say. He was not more than five feet two or three in height, but so well made; and he had little hands that he kept so beautifully! Ah! you should have seen them.

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He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for her toilet. He had thick, black hair, a flame in his eye, a somewhat coppery complexion, but which I admired all the same. He wore the finest linen I have ever seen, though I have had princesses to lodge here, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantés, Monsieur Descazes, and the King of Spain. He did not eat much, but he had such polite and amiable ways that it was impossible to owe him a grudge for that. Oh! I was very fond of him, though he did not say four words to me in a day, and it was impossible to have the least bit of talk with him; if he was spoken to, he did not answer; it is a way, a mania they all have, it would seem.

"'He read his breviary like a priest, and went to mass and all the services quite regularly. And where did he post himself?—we found this out later.—Within two yards of Madame de Merret's chapel. As he took that place the very first time he entered the church, no one imagined that there was any purpose in it. Besides, he never raised his nose above his book, poor young man! And then, monsieur, of an evening he went for a walk on the hill among the ruins of the old castle. It was his only amusement, poor man; it reminded him of his native land. They say that Spain is all hills!

"'One evening, a few days after he was sent here, he was out very late. I was rather uneasy when he did not come in till just on the stroke of midnight; but we all got used to his whims; he took the key of the door, and we never sat up for him. He lived in a house belonging to us in the Rue des Casernes. Well, then, one of our stable-boys told us one evening that, going down to wash the horses in the river, he fancied he had seen the Spanish Grandee swimming some little way off, just like a fish. When he came in, I told him to be careful of the weeds, and he seemed put out at having been seen in the water.

"'At last, monsieur, one day, or rather one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come back. By hunting through his things, I found a written paper in the

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drawer of his table, with fifty pieces of Spanish gold of the kind they call doubloons, worth about five thousand francs; and in a little sealed box ten thousand francs worth of diamonds. The paper said that in case he should not return, he left us this money and these diamonds in trust to found masses to thank God for his escape and for his salvation.

"'At that time I still had my husband, who ran off in search of him. And this is the queer part of the story: he brought back the Spaniard's clothes, which he had found under a big stone on a sort of breakwater along the river bank, nearly opposite la Grande Bretêche. My husband went so early that no one saw him. After reading the letter, he burnt the clothes, and, in obedience to Count Férédia's wish, we announced that he had escaped.

"'The sub-prefect set all the constabulary at his heels; but, pshaw! he was never caught. Lepas believed that the Spaniard had drowned himself. I, sir, have never thought so; I believe, on the contrary, that he had something to do with the business about Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix her mistress was so fond of that she had it buried with her, was made of ebony and silver; now in the early days of his stay here, Monsieur Férédia had one of ebony and silver which I never saw later.—And now, monsieur, do not you say that I need have no remorse about the Spaniard's fifteen thousand francs? Are they not really and truly mine?'

"'Certainly.—But have you never tried to question Rosalie?' said I.

"'Oh, to be sure I have, sir. But what is to be done? That girl is like a wall. She knows something, but it is impossible to make her talk.'

"After chatting with me for a few minutes, my hostess left me a prey to vague and sinister thoughts, to romantic curiosity, and a religious dread, not unlike the deep emotion which comes upon us when we go into a dark church at night and discern a feeble light glimmering under a lofty vault—a dim figure glides across—the sweep of a gown or of a priest's

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cassock is audible—and we shiver! La Grande Bretêche, with its rank grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty iron-work, its locked doors, it deserted rooms, suddenly rose before me in fantastic vividness. I tried to get into the mysterious dwelling to search out the heart of this solemn story, this drama which had killed three persons.

"Rosalie became in my eyes the most interesting being in Vendôme. As I studied her, I detected signs of an inmost thought, in spite of the blooming health that glowed in her dimpled face. There was in her soul some element of ruth or of hope; her manner suggested a secret, like the expression of devout souls who pray in excess, or of a girl who has killed her child and for ever hears its last cry. Nevertheless, she was simple and clumsy in her ways; her vacant smile had nothing criminal in it, and you would have pronounced her innocent only from seeing the large red and blue checked kerchief that covered her stalwart bust, tucked into the tight-laced square bodice of a lilac- and white-striped gown. 'No,' said I to myself, 'I will not quit Vendôme without knowing the whole history of la Grande Bretêche. To achieve this end, I will make love to Rosalie if it proves necessary.'

"'Rosalie!' said I one evening.

"'Your servant, sir?'

"'You are not married?' She started a little.

"'Oh! there is no lack of men if ever I take a fancy to be miserable!' she replied, laughing. She got over her agitation at once; for every woman, from the highest lady to the inn-servant inclusive, has a native presence of mind.

"'Yes; you are fresh and good-looking enough never to lack lovers! But tell me, Rosalie, why did you become an inn-servant on leaving Madame de Merret? Did she not leave you some little annuity?'

"'Oh yes, sir. But my place here is the best in all the town of Vendôme.'

"This reply was such an one as judges and attorneys call evasive. Rosalie, as it seemed to me, held in this romantic affair the place of the middle square of the chess-board; she

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was at the very centre of the interest and of the truth; she appeared to me to be tied into the knot of it. It was not a case for ordinary love-making; this girl contained the last chapter of a romance, and from that moment all my attentions were devoted to Rosalie. By dint of studying the girl, I observed in her, as in every woman whom we make our ruling thought, a variety of good qualities; she was clean and neat; she was handsome, I need not say; she soon was possessed of every charm that desire can lend to a woman in whatever rank of life. A fortnight after the notary's visit, one evening, or rather one morning, in the small hours, I said to Rosalie:

"'Come, tell me all you know about Madame de Merret.'

"'Oh!' she cried in terror, 'do not ask me that, Monsieur Horace!'

"Her handsome features clouded over, her bright coloring grew pale, and her eyes lost their artless, liquid brightness.

"'Well,' she said, 'I will tell you; but keep the secret carefully.'

"'All right, my child; I will keep all your secrets with a thief's honor, which is the most loyal known.'

"'If it is all the same to you,' said she, 'I would rather it should be with your own.'

"Thereupon she set her head-kerchief straight, and settled herself to tell the tale; for there is no doubt a particular attitude of confidence and security is necessary to the telling of a narrative. The best tales are told at a certain hour—just as we are all here at table. No one ever told a story well standing up, or fasting.

"If I were to reproduce exactly Rosalie's diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarcely contain it. Now, as the event of which she gave me a confused account stands exactly midway between the notary's gossip and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the middle term of a rule-of-three sum stands between the first and third, I have only to relate it in as few words as may be. I shall therefore be brief.

"The room at La Grande Bretêche in which Madame de Merret slept was on the ground floor; a little cupboard in

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the wall, about four feet deep, served her to hang her dresses in. Three months before the evening of which I have to relate the events, Madame de Merret had been seriously ailing, so much so that her husband had left her to herself, and had his own bedroom on the first floor. By one of those accidents which it is impossible to foresee, he came in that evening two hours later than usual from the club, where he went to read the papers and talk politics with the residents in the neighborhood. His wife supposed him to have come in, to be in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a very animated discussion; the game of billiards had waxed vehement; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum at Vendôme, where everybody is thrifty, and where social habits are restrained within the bounds of a simplicity worthy of all praise, and the foundation perhaps of a form of true happiness which no Parisian would care for.

"For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been satisfied to ask Rosalie whether his wife was in bed; on the girl's replying always in the affirmative, he at once went to his own room, with the good faith that comes of habit and confidence. But this evening, on coming in, he took it into his head to go to see Madame de Merret, to tell her of his ill-luck, and perhaps to find consolation. During dinner he had observed that his wife was very becomingly dressed; he reflected as he came home from the club that his wife was certainly much better, that convalescence had improved her beauty, discovering it, as husbands discover everything, a little too late. Instead of calling Rosalie, who was in the kitchen at the moment watching the cook and the coachman playing a puzzling hand at cards, Monsieur de Merret made his way to his wife's room by the light of his lantern, which he set down on the lowest step of the stairs. His step, easy to recognize, rang under the vaulted passage.

"At the instant when the gentleman turned the key to enter his wife's room, he fancied he heard the door shut of the closet of which I have spoken; but when he went in, Madame de Merret was alone, standing in front of the fireplace. The

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unsuspecting husband fancied that Rosalie was in the cupboard; nevertheless, a doubt, ringing in his ears like a peal of bells, put him on his guard; he looked at his wife, and read in her eyes an indescribably anxious and haunted expression.

"'You are very late,' said she.—Her voice, usually so clear and sweet, struck him as being slightly husky.

"Monsieur de Merret made no reply, for at this moment Rosalie came in. This was like a thunder-clap. He walked up and down the room, going from one window to another at a regular pace, his arms folded.

"'Have you had bad news, or are you ill?' his wife asked him timidly, while Rosalie helped her to undress. He made no reply.

"'You can go, Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret to her maid; 'I can put in my curl-papers myself.'—She scented disaster at the mere aspect of her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him. As soon as Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she lingered a few minutes in the passage, Monsieur de Merret came and stood facing his wife, and said coldly, 'Madame, there is some one in your cupboard!' She looked at her husband calmly, and replied quite simply, 'No, monsieur.'

"This 'No' wrung Monsieur de Merret's heart; he did not believe it; and yet his wife had never appeared purer or more saintly than she seemed to be at this moment. He rose to go and open the closet door. Madame de Merret took his hand, stopped him, looked at him sadly, and said in a voice of strange emotion, 'Remember, if you should find no one there, everything must be at an end between you and me.'

"The extraordinary dignity of his wife's attitude filled him with deep esteem for her, and inspired him with one of those resolves which need only a grander stage to become immortal.

"'No, Josephine,' he said, 'I will not open it. In either event we should be parted for ever. Listen; I know all the purity of your soul, I know you lead a saintly life, and would not commit a deadly sin to save your life.'—At these words

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Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard stare.—'See, here is your crucifix,' he went on. 'Swear to me before God that there is no one in there; I will believe you—I will never open that door.'

"Madame de Merret took up the crucifix and said, 'I swear it.'

" 'Louder,' said her husband; 'and repeat: "I swear before God that there is nobody in that closet."' She repeated the words without flinching.

" 'That will do,' said Monsieur de Merret coldly. After a moment's silence: 'You have there a fine piece of work which I never saw before,' said he, examining the crucifix of ebony and silver, very artistically wrought.

" 'I found it at Duvivier's; last year when that troop of Spanish prisoners came through Vendôme, he bought it of a Spanish monk.'

" 'Indeed,' said Monsieur de Merret, hanging the crucifix on its nail; and he rang the bell.

"He had not to wait for Rosalie. Monsieur de Merret went forward quickly to meet her, led her into the bay of the window that looked on to the garden, and said to her in an undertone:

" 'I know that Gorenflot wants to marry you, that poverty alone prevents your setting up house, and that you told him you would not be his wife till he found means to become a master mason.—Well, go and fetch him; tell him to come here with his trowel and tools. Contrive to wake no one in his house but himself. His reward will be beyond your wishes. Above all, go out without saying a word—or else!' and he frowned.

"Rosalie was going, and he called her back. 'Here, take my latch-key,' said he.

" 'Jean!' Monsieur de Merret called in a voice of thunder down the passage. Jean, who was both coachman and confidential servant, left his cards and came.

" 'Go to bed, all of you,' said his master, beckoning him to come close; and the gentleman added in a whisper, 'When

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they are all asleep—mind, *asleep*—you understand?—come down and tell me.'

"Monsieur de Merret, who had never lost sight of his wife while giving his orders, quietly came back to her at the fireside, and began to tell her the details of the game of billiards and the discussion at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret conversing amiably.

"Not long before this Monsieur de Merret had had new ceilings made to all the reception-rooms on the ground floor. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme; the price is enhanced by the cost of carriage; the gentleman had therefore had a considerable quantity delivered to him, knowing that he could always find purchasers for what might be left. It was this circumstance which suggested the plan he carried out.

" 'Gorenflot is here, sir,' said Rosalie in a whisper.

" 'Tell him to come in,' said her master aloud.

"Madame de Merret turned paler when she saw the mason.

" 'Gorenflot,' said her husband, 'go and fetch some bricks from the coach-house; bring enough to wall up the door of this cupboard; you can use the plaster that is left for cement.' Then, dragging Rosalie and the workman close to him—'Listen, Gorenflot,' said he, in a low voice, 'you are to sleep here to-night; but to-morrow morning you shall have a passport to take you abroad to a place I will tell you of. I will give you six thousand francs for your journey. You must live in that town for ten years; if you find you do not like it, you may settle in another, but it must be in the same country. Go through Paris and wait there till I join you. I will there give you an agreement for six thousand francs more, to be paid to you on your return, provided you have carried out the conditions of the bargain. For that price you are to keep perfect silence as to what you have to do this night. To you, Rosalie, I will secure ten thousand francs, which will not be paid to you till your wedding day, and on condition of your marrying Gorenflot; but, to get married, you must hold your tongue. If not, no wedding gift!'

" 'Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret, 'come and brush my hair.'

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"Her husband quietly walked up and down the room, keeping an eye on the door, on the mason, and on his wife, but without any insulting display of suspicion. Gorenflot could not help making some noise. Madame de Merret seized a moment when he was unloading some bricks, and when her husband was at the other end of the room, to say to Rosalie: 'My dear child, I will give you a thousand francs a year if only you will tell Gorenflot to leave a crack at the bottom.' Then she added aloud quite coolly: 'You had better help him.'

"Monsieur and Madame de Merret were silent all the time while Gorenflot was walling up the door. This silence was intentional on the husband's part; he did not wish to give his wife the opportunity of saying anything with a double meaning. On Madame de Merret's side it was pride or prudence. When the wall was half built up the cunning mason took advantage of his master's back being turned to break one of the two panes in the top of the door with a blow of his pick. By this Madame de Merret understood that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. They all three then saw the face of a dark, gloomy-looking man, with black hair and flaming eyes.

"Before her husband turned round again the poor woman had nodded to the stranger, to whom the signal was meant to convey, 'Hope.'

"At four o'clock, as day was dawning, for it was the month of September, the work was done. The mason was placed in charge of Jean, and Monsieur de Merret slept in his wife's room.

"Next morning when he got up he said with apparent carelessness, 'Oh, by the way, I must go to the Mairie for the passport.' He put on his hat, took two or three steps towards the door, paused, and took the crucifix. His wife was trembling with joy.

" 'He will go to Duvivier's,' thought she.

"As soon as he had left, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie, and then in a terrible voice she cried: 'The pick! Bring the pick! and set to work. I saw how Gorenflot did it yesterday: we shall have time to make a gap and build it up again.'

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"In an instant Rosalie had brought her mistress a sort of cleaver; she, with a vehemence of which no words can give an idea, set to work to demolish the wall. She had already got out a few bricks, when, turning to deal a stronger blow than before, she saw behind her Monsieur de Merret. She fainted away.

"'Lay madame on her bed,' said he coldly.

"Foreseeing what would certainly happen in his absence, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had merely written to the Maire and sent for Duvivier. The jeweler arrived just as the disorder in the room had been repaired.

"'Duvivier,' asked Monsieur de Merret, 'did not you buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through the town?'

"'No, monsieur.'

"'Very good; thank you,' said he, flashing a tiger's glare at his wife. 'Jean,' he added, turning to his confidential valet, 'you can serve my meals here in Madame de Merret's room. She is ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers.'

"The cruel man remained in his wife's room for twenty days. During the earlier time, when there was some little noise in the closet, and Josephine wanted to intercede for the dying man, he said, without allowing her to utter a word, 'You swore on the Cross that there was no one there.'"

After this story all the ladies rose from table, and thus the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. But there were some among them who had almost shivered at the last words.

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She fainted away

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DOMESTIC PEACE

Dedicated to my dear niece Valentine Surville.

THE incident recorded in this sketch took place towards the end of the month of November 1809, the moment when Napoleon's fugitive empire attained the apogee of its splendor. The trumpet-blasts of Wagram were still sounding an echo in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was being signed between France and the Coalition. Kings and princes came to perform their orbits, like stars, round Napoleon, who gave himself the pleasure of dragging all Europe in his train —a magnificent experiment in the power he afterwards displayed at Dresden. Never, as contemporaries tell us, did Paris see entertainments more superb than those which preceded and followed the sovereign's marriage with an Austrian archduchess. Never, in the most splendid days of the Monarchy, had so many crowned heads thronged the shores of the Seine, never had the French aristocracy been so rich or so splendid. The diamonds lavishly scattered over the women's dresses, and the gold and silver embroidery on the uniforms contrasted so strongly with the penury of the Republic, that the wealth of the globe seemed to be rolling through the drawing-rooms of Paris. Intoxication seemed to have turned the brains of this Empire of a day. All the military, not excepting their chief, reveled like parvenus in the treasure conquered for them by a million men with worsted epaulettes, whose demands were satisfied by a few yards of red ribbon.

At this time most women affected that lightness of conduct and facility of morals which distinguished the reign of Louis XV. Whether it were in imitation of the tone of the fallen monarchy, or because certain members of the Imperial family

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had set the example—as certain malcontents of the Faubourg Saint-Germain chose to say—it is certain that men and women alike flung themselves into a life of pleasure with an intrepidity which seemed to forebode the end of the world. But there was at that time another cause for such license. The infatuation of women for the military became a frenzy, and was too consonant to the Emperor's views for him to try to check it. The frequent calls to arms, which gave every treaty concluded between Napoleon and the rest of Europe the character of an armistice, left every passion open to a termination as sudden as the decisions of the Commander-in-chief of all these busbys, pelisses, and aiguillettes, which so fascinated the fair sex. Hearts were as nomadic as the regiments. Between the first and the fifth bulletins from the *Grande Armée* a woman might be in succession mistress, wife, mother, and widow.

Was it the prospect of early widowhood, the hope of a jointure, or that of bearing a name promised to history, which made the soldiers so attractive? Were women drawn to them by the certainty that the secret of their passions would be buried on the field of battle? or may we find the reason of this gentle fanaticism in the noble charm that courage has for a woman? Perhaps all these reasons, which the future historian of the manners of the Empire will no doubt amuse himself by weighing, counted for something in their facile readiness to abandon themselves to love intrigues. Be that as it may, it must here be confessed that at that time laurels hid many errors, women showed an ardent preference for the brave adventurers, whom they regarded as the true fount of honor, wealth, or pleasure; and in the eyes of young girls, an epaulette—the hieroglyphic of a future—signified happiness and liberty.

One feature, and a characteristic one, of this unique period in our history was an unbridled mania for everything glittering. Never were fireworks so much in vogue, never were diamonds so highly prized. The men, as greedy as the women of these translucent pebbles, displayed them no less lavishly.

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Possibly the necessity for carrying plunder in the most portable form made gems the fashion in the army. A man was not ridiculous then, as he would be now, if his shirt-frill or his fingers blazed with large diamonds. Murat, an Oriental by nature, set the example of preposterous luxury to modern soldiers.

The Comte de Gondreville, formerly known as Citizen Malin, whose elevation had made him famous, having become a Lucullus of the Conservative Senate, which "conserved" nothing, had postponed an entertainment in honor of the peace only that he might the better pay his court to Napoleon by his efforts to eclipse those flatterers who had been beforehand with him. The ambassadors from all the Powers friendly with France, with an eye to favors to come, the most important personages of the Empire, and even a few princes, were at this hour assembled in the wealthy senator's drawing-rooms. Dancing flagged; every one was watching for the Emperor, whose presence the Count had promised his guests. And Napoleon would have kept his word but for the scene which had broken out that very evening between him and Josephine—the scene which portended the impending divorce of the august pair. The report of this incident, at the time kept very secret, but recorded by history, did not reach the ears of the courtiers, and had no effect on the gaiety of Comte de Gondreville's party beyond keeping Napoleon away.

The prettiest women in Paris, eager to be at the Count's on the strength of mere hearsay, at this moment were a besieging force of luxury, coquettishness, elegance, and beauty. The financial world, proud of its riches, challenged the splendor of the generals and high officials of the Empire, so recently gorged with orders, titles, and honors. These grand balls were always an opportunity seized upon by wealthy families for introducing their heiresses to Napoleon's Prætorian Guard, in the foolish hope of exchanging their splendid fortunes for uncertain favors. The women who believed themselves strong enough in their beauty alone came to test their power. There, as elsewhere, amusement was but a blind. Calm

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and smiling faces and placid brows covered sordid interests, expressions of friendship were a lie, and more than one man was less distrustful of his enemies than of his friends.

These remarks are necessary to explain the incidents of the little imbroglio which is the subject of this study, and the picture, softened as it is, of the tone then dominant in Paris drawing-rooms.

"Turn your eyes a little towards the pedestal supporting that candelabrum—do you see a young lady with her hair drawn back *à la Chinoise!*—There, in the corner to the left; she has bluebells in the knot of chestnut curls which fall in clusters on her head. Do not you see her? She is so pale you might fancy she was ill, delicate-looking, and very small; there—now she is turning her head this way; her almond-shaped blue eyes, so delightfully soft, look as if they were made expressly for tears. Look, look! She is bending forward to see Madame de Vaudremont below the crowd of heads in constant motion; the high head-dresses prevent her having a clear view."

"I see her now, my dear fellow. You had only to say that she had the whitest skin of all the women here; I should have known whom you meant. I had noticed her before; she has the loveliest complexion I ever admired. From hence I defy you to see against her throat the pearls between the sapphires of her necklace. But she is a prude or a coquette, for the tucker of her bodice scarcely lets one suspect the beauty of her bust. What shoulders! what lily-whiteness!"

"Who is she?" asked the first speaker.

"Ah! that I do not know."

"Aristocrat!—Do you want to keep them all to yourself, Montcornet?"

"You of all men to banter me!" replied Montcornet, with a smile. "Do you think you have a right to insult a poor general like me because, being a happy rival of Soulanges, you cannot even turn on your heel without alarming Madame de Vaudremont? Or is it because I came only a month ago into the Promised Land? How insolent you can be, you men

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in office, who sit glued to your chairs while we are dodging shot and shell! Come, Monsieur le Maître des Requêtes, allow us to glean in the field of which you can only have precarious possession from the moment when we evacuate it. The deuce is in it! We have all a right to live! My good friend, if you knew the German women, you would, I believe, do me a good turn with the Parisian you love best."

"Well, General, since you have vouchsafed to turn your attention to that lady, whom I never saw till now, have the charity to tell me if you have seen her dance."

"Why, my dear Martial, where have you dropped from? If you are ever sent with an embassy, I have small hopes of your success. Do not you see a triple rank of the most undaunted coquettes of Paris between her and the swarm of dancing men that buzz under the chandelier? And was it not only by the help of your eyeglass that you were able to discover her at all in the corner by that pillar, where she seems buried in the gloom, in spite of the candles blazing above her head? Between her and us there is such a sparkle of diamonds and glances, so many floating plumes, such a flutter of lace, of flowers and curls, that it would be a real miracle if any dancer could detect her among those stars. Why, Martial, how is it that you have not understood her to be the wife of some sous-préfet from Lippe or Dyle, who has come to try to get her husband promoted?"

"Oh, he will be!" exclaimed the Master of Appeals quickly.

"I doubt it," replied the Colonel of Cuirassiers, laughing. "She seems as raw in intrigue as you are in diplomacy. I dare bet, Martial, that you do not know how she got into that place."

The lawyer looked at the Colonel of Cuirassiers with an expression as much of contempt as of curiosity.

"Well," proceeded Montcornet, "she arrived, I have no doubt, punctually at nine, the first of the company perhaps, and probably she greatly embarrassed the Comtesse de Gondreville, who cannot put two ideas together. Repulsed by the

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mistress of the house, routed from chair to chair by each newcomer, and driven into the darkness of this little corner, she allowed herself to be walled in, the victim of the jealousy of the other ladies, who would gladly have buried that dangerous beauty. She had, of course, no friend to encourage her to maintain the place she first held in the front rank; then each of those treacherous fair ones would have enjoined on the men of her circle on no account to take out our poor friend, under pain of the severest punishment. That, my dear fellow, is the way in which those sweet faces, in appearance so tender and so artless, would have formed a coalition against the stranger, and that without a word beyond the question, 'Tell me, dear, do you know that little woman in blue?'—Look here, Martial, if you care to run the gantlet of more flattering glances and inviting questions than you will ever again meet in the whole of your life, just try to get through the triple rampart which defends that Queen of Dyle, or Lippe, or Charente. You will see whether the dullest woman of them all will not be equal to inventing some wile that would hinder the most determined man from bringing the plaintive stranger to the light. Does it not strike you that she looks like an elegy?"

"Do you think so, Montcornet? Then she must be a married woman?"

"Why not a widow?"

"She would be less passive," said the lawyer, laughing.

"She is perhaps the widow of a man who is gambling," replied the handsome Colonel.

"To be sure; since the peace there are so many widows of that class!" said Martial. "But, my dear Montcornet, we are a couple of simpletons. That face is still too ingenuous, there is too much youth and freshness on the brow and temples for her to be married. What splendid flesh-tints! Nothing has sunk in the modeling of the nose. Lips, chin, everything in her face is as fresh as a white rosebud, though the expression is veiled, as it were, by the clouds of sadness. Who can it be that makes that young creature weep?"

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"Women cry for so little," said the Colonel.

"I do not know," replied Martial; "but she does not cry because she is left there without a partner; her grief is not of to-day. It is evident that she has beautified herself for this evening with intention. I would wager that she is in love already."

"Bah! She is perhaps the daughter of some German princeling; no one talks to her," said Montcornet.

"Dear! how unhappy a poor child may be!" Martial went on. "Can there be anything more graceful and refined than our little stranger? Well, not one of those furies who stand round her, and who believe that they can feel, will say a word to her. If she would but speak, we should see if she has fine teeth."

"Bless me, you boil over like milk at the least increase of temperature!" cried the Colonel, a little nettled at so soon finding a rival in his friend.

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer, without heeding the Colonel's question. "Can nobody here tell us the name of this exotic flower?"

"Some lady companion!" said Montcornet.

"What next? A companion! wearing sapphires fit for a queen, and a dress of Malines lace? Tell that to the marines, General. You, too, would not shine in diplomacy if, in the course of your conjectures, you jump in a breath from a German princess to a lady companion."

Montcornet stopped a man by taking his arm—a fat little man, whose iron-gray hair and clever eyes were to be seen at the lintel of every doorway, and who mingled unceremoniously with the various groups which welcomed him respectfully.

"Gondreville, my friend," said Montcornet, "who is that quite charming little woman sitting out there under that huge candelabrum?"

"The candelabrum? Ravrio's work; Isabey made the design."

"Oh, I recognized your lavishness and taste; but the lady?"

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"Ah! I do not know. Some friend of my wife's, no doubt."

"Or your mistress, you old rascal."

"No, on my honor. The Comtesse de Gondreville is the only person capable of inviting people whom no one knows."

In spite of this very acrimonious comment, the fat little man's lips did not lose the smile which the Colonel's suggestion had brought to them. Montcornet returned to the lawyer, who had rejoined a neighboring group, intent on asking, but in vain, for information as to the fair unknown. He grasped Martial's arm, and said in his ear:

"My dear Martial, mind what you are about. Madame de Vaudremont has been watching you for some minutes with ominous attentiveness; she is a woman who can guess by the mere movement of your lips what you say to me; our eyes have already told her too much; she has perceived and followed their direction, and I suspect that at this moment she is thinking even more than we are of the little blue lady."

"That is too old a trick in warfare, my dear Montcornet! However, what do I care? Like the Emperor, when I have made a conquest, I keep it."

"Martial, your fatuity cries out for a lesson. What! you, a civilian, and so lucky as to be the husband-designate of Madame de Vaudremont, a widow of two-and-twenty, burdened with four thousand napoleons a year—a woman who slips such a diamond as this on your finger," he added, taking the lawyer's left hand, which the young man complacently allowed; "and, to crown all, you affect the Lovelace, just as if you were a colonel and obliged to keep up the reputation of the military in home quarters! Fie, fie! Only think of all you may lose."

"At any rate, I shall not lose my liberty," replied Martial, with a forced laugh.

He cast a passionate glance at Madame de Vaudremont, who responded only by a smile of some uneasiness, for she had seen the Colonel examining the lawyer's ring.

"Listen to me, Martial. If you flutter round my young stranger, I shall set to work to win Madame de Vaudremont."

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"You have my full permission, my dear Cuirassier, but you will not gain this much," and the young Maître des Requêtes put his polished thumb-nail under an upper tooth with a little mocking click.

"Remember that I am unmarried," said the Colonel; "that my sword is my whole fortune; and that such a challenge is setting Tantalus down to a banquet which he will devour."

"Prrr."

This defiant roll of consonants was the only reply to the Colonel's declaration, as Martial looked him from head to foot before turning away.

The fashion of the time required men to wear at a ball white kerseymere breeches and silk stockings. This pretty costume showed to great advantage the perfection of Montcornet's fine shape. He was five-and-thirty, and attracted attention by his stalwart height, insisted on for the Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard whose handsome uniform enhanced the dignity of his figure, still youthful in spite of the stoutness occasioned by living on horseback. A black moustache emphasized the frank expression of a thoroughly soldierly countenance, with a broad, high forehead, an aquiline nose, and bright red lips. Montcornet's manner, stamped with a certain superiority due to the habit of command, might please a woman sensible enough not to aim at making a slave of her husband. The Colonel smiled as he looked at the lawyer, one of his favorite college friends, whose small figure made it necessary for Montcornet to look down a little as he answered his raillery with a friendly glance.

Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal patronized by Napoleon; his fate might probably be some splendid embassy. He had won the Emperor by his Italian suppleness and a genius for intrigue, a drawing-room eloquence, and a knowledge of manners, which are so good a substitute for the higher qualities of a sterling man. Though young and eager, his face had already acquired the rigid brilliancy of tinned iron, one of the indispensable characteristics of diplomatists, which allows them to conceal their emo-

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tions and disguise their feelings, unless, indeed, this impassibility indicates an absence of all emotion and the death of every feeling. The heart of a diplomate may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the time have been distinguished by perdurable hatreds and most romantic attachments.

Martial, however, was one of those men who are capable of reckoning on the future in the midst of their intensest enjoyment; he had already learned to judge the world, and hid his ambition under the fatuity of a lady-killer, cloaking his talent under the commonplace of mediocrity as soon as he observed the rapid advancement of those men who gave the master little umbrage.

The two friends now had to part with a cordial grasp of hands. The introductory tune, warning the ladies to form in squares for a fresh quadrille, cleared the men away from the space they had filled while talking in the middle of the large room. This hurried dialogue had taken place during the usual interval between two dances, in front of the fireplace of the great drawing-room of Gondreville's mansion. The questions and answers of this very ordinary ballroom gossip had been almost whispered by each of the speakers into his neighbor's ear. At the same time, the chandeliers and the flambeaux on the chimney-shelf shed such a flood of light on the two friends that their faces, strongly illuminated, failed, in spite of their diplomatic discretion, to conceal the faint expression of their feelings either from the keen-sighted countess or the artless stranger. This espionage of people's thoughts is perhaps to idle persons one of the pleasures they find in society, while numbers of disappointed numskulls are bored there without daring to own it.

Fully to appreciate the interest of this conversation, it is necessary to relate an incident which would presently serve as an invisible bond, drawing together the actors in this little drama, who were at present scattered through the rooms.

At about eleven o'clock, just as the dancers were returning

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to their seats, the company had observed the entrance of the handsomest woman in Paris, the queen of fashion, the only person wanting to this brilliant assembly. She made it a rule never to appear till the moment when a party had reached that pitch of excited movement which does not allow the women to preserve much longer the freshness of their faces or of their dress. This brief hour is, as it were, the spring-time of a ball. An hour after, when pleasure falls flat and fatigue is encroaching, everything is spoilt. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the blunder of remaining at a party to be seen with drooping flowers, hair out of curl, tumbled frills, and a face like every other that sleep is courting—not always without success. She took good care not to let her beauty be seen drowsy, as her rivals did; she was so clever as to keep up her reputation for smartness by always leaving a ballroom in brilliant order, as she had entered it. Women whispered to each other with a feeling of envy that she planned and wore as many different dresses as the parties she went to in one evening.

On the present occasion Madame de Vaudremont was not destined to be free to leave when she would the ballroom she had entered in triumph. Pausing for a moment on the threshold, she shot swift but observant glances on the women present, hastily scrutinizing their dresses to assure herself that her own eclipsed them all.

The illustrious beauty presented herself to the admiration of the crowd at the same moment with one of the bravest colonels of the Guards' Artillery and the Emperor's favorite, the Comte de Soulanges. The transient and fortuitous association of these two had about it a certain air of mystery. On hearing the names announced of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont, a few women sitting by the wall rose, and men, hurrying in from the side-rooms, pressed forward to the principal doorway. One of the jesters who are always to be found in any large assembly said, as the Countess and her escort came in, that "women had quite as much curiosity about seeing a man who was faithful to his

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passion as men had in studying a woman who was difficult to enthrall."

Though the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of about two-and-thirty, was endowed with the nervous temperament which in a man gives rise to fine qualities, his slender build and pale complexion were not at first sight attractive; his black eyes betrayed great vivacity, but he was taciturn in company, and there was nothing in his appearance to reveal the gift for oratory which subsequently distinguished him, on the Right, in the legislative assembly under the Restoration.

The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall woman, rather fat, with a skin of dazzling whiteness, a small head that she carried well, and the immense advantage of inspiring love by the graciousness of her manner, was one of those beings who keep all the promise of their beauty.

The pair, who for a few minutes were the centre of general observation, did not for long give curiosity an opportunity of exercising itself about them. The Colonel and the Countess seemed perfectly to understand that accident had placed them in an awkward position. Martial, as they came forward, had hastened to join the group of men by the fireplace, that he might watch Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous anxiety of the first flame of passion, from behind the heads which formed a sort of rampart; a secret voice seemed to warn him that the success on which he prided himself might perhaps be precarious. But the coldly polite smile with which the Countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges, and her little bow of dismissal as she sat down by Madame de Gondreville, relaxed the muscles of his face which jealousy had made rigid. Seeing Soulanges, however, still standing quite near the sofa on which Madame de Vaudremont was seated, not apparently having understood the glance by which the lady had conveyed to him that they were both playing a ridiculous part, the volcanic Provençal again knit the black brows that overshadowed his blue eyes, smoothed his chestnut curls to keep himself in countenance, and without betraying the agitation which made his heart beat, watched the faces of the Countess and of

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M. de Soulanges while still chatting with his neighbors. He then took the hand of Colonel Montcornet, who had just renewed their old acquaintance, but he listened to him without hearing him; his mind was elsewhere.

Soulanges was gazing calmly at the women, sitting four ranks deep all round the immense ballroom, admiring this dado of diamonds, rubies, masses of gold and shining hair, of which the lustre almost outshone the blaze of waxlights, the cutglass of the chandeliers, and the gilding. His rival's stolid indifference put the lawyer out of countenance. Quite incapable of controlling his secret transports of impatience, Martial went towards Madame de Vaudremont with a bow. On seeing the Provençal, Soulanges gave him a covert glance, and impertinently turned away his head. Solemn silence now reigned in the room, where curiosity was at the highest pitch. All these eager faces wore the strangest mixed expressions; every one apprehended one of those outbreaks which men of breeding carefully avoid. Suddenly the Count's pale face turned as red as the scarlet facings of his coat, and he fixed his gaze on the floor that the cause of his agitation might not be guessed. On catching sight of the unknown lady humbly seated by the pedestal of the candelabrum, he moved away with a melancholy air, passing in front of the lawyer, and took refuge in one of the cardrooms. Martial and all the company thought that Soulanges had publicly surrendered the post, out of fear of the ridicule which invariably attaches to a discarded lover. The lawyer proudly raised his head and looked at the strange lady; then, as he took his seat at his ease near Madame de Vaudremont, he listened to her so inattentively that he did not catch these words spoken behind her fan:

"Martial, you will oblige me this evening by not wearing that ring that you snatched from me. I have my reasons, and will explain them to you in a moment when we go away. You must give me your arm to go to the Princesse de Wagram's."

"Why did you come in with the Colonel?" asked the Baron.

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"I met him in the hall," she replied. "But leave me now; everybody is looking at us."

Martial returned to the Colonel of Cuirassiers. Then it was that the little blue lady had become the object of the curiosity which agitated in such various ways the Colonel, Soulanges, Martial, and Madame de Vaudremont.

When the friends parted, after the challenge which closed their conversation, the Baron flew to Madame de Vaudremont, and led her to a place in the most brilliant quadrille. Favored by the sort of intoxication which dancing always produces in a woman, and by the turmoil of a ball, where men appear in all the trickery of dress, which adds no less to their attractions than it does to those of women, Martial thought he might yield with impunity to the charm that attracted his gaze to the fair stranger. Though he succeeded in hiding his first glances towards the lady in blue from the anxious activity of the Countess' eyes, he was ere long caught in the fact; and though he managed to excuse himself once for his absence of mind, he could not justify the unseemly silence with which he presently heard the most insinuating question which a woman can put to a man:

"Do you like me very much this evening?"

And the more dreamy he became, the more the Countess pressed and teased him.

While Martial was dancing, the Colonel moved from group to group, seeking information about the unknown lady. After exhausting the good-humor even of the most indifferent, he had resolved to take advantage of a moment when the Comtesse de Gondreville seemed to be at liberty, to ask her the name of the mysterious lady, when he perceived a little space left clear between the pedestal of the candelabrum and the two sofas, which ended in that corner. The dance had left several of the chairs vacant, which formed rows of fortifications held by mothers or women of middle age; and the Colonel seized the opportunity to make his way through this palisade hung with shawls and wraps. He began by making himself agreeable to the dowagers, and so from one to another, and

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from compliment to compliment, he at last reached the empty space next the stranger. At the risk of catching on to the gryphons and chimæras of the huge candelabrum, he stood there, braving the glare and dropping of the wax candles, to Martial's extreme annoyance.

The Colonel, far too tactful to speak suddenly to the little blue lady on his right, began by saying to a plain woman who was seated on the left:

"This is a splendid ball, madame! What luxury! What life! On my word, every woman here is pretty! You are not dancing—because you do not care for it, no doubt."

This vapid conversation was solely intended to induce his right-hand neighbor to speak; but she, silent and absent-minded, paid not the least attention. The officer had in store a number of phrases which he intended should lead up to: "And you, madame?"—a question from which he hoped great things. But he was strangely surprised to see tears in the strange lady's eyes, which seemed wholly absorbed in gazing on Madame de Vaudremont.

"You are married, no doubt, madame?" he asked her at length, in hesitating tones.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the lady.

"And your husband is here, of course?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And why, madame, do you remain in this spot? Is it to attract attention?"

The mournful lady smiled sadly.

"Allow me the honor, madame, of being your partner in the next quadrille, and I will take care not to bring you back here. I see a vacant settee near the fire; come and take it. When so many people are ready to ascend the throne, and Royalty is the mania of the day, I cannot imagine that you will refuse the title of Queen of the Ball which your beauty may claim."

"I do not intend to dance, monsieur."

The curt tone of the lady's replies was so discouraging that the Colonel found himself compelled to raise the siege. Mar-

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tial, who guessed what the officer's last request had been, and the refusal he had met with, began to smile, and stroked his chin, making the diamond sparkle which he wore on his finger.

"What are you laughing at?" said the Comtesse de Vaudremont.

"At the failure of the poor Colonel, who has just put his foot in it——"

"I begged you to take your ring off," said the Countess, interrupting him.

"I did not hear you."

"If you can hear nothing this evening, at any rate you see everything, Monsieur le Baron," said Madame de Vaudremont, with an air of vexation.

"That young man is displaying a very fine diamond," the stranger remarked to the Colonel.

"Splendid," he replied. "The man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends."

"I have to thank you for telling me his name," she went on; "he seems an agreeable man."

"Yes, but he is rather fickle."

"He seems to be on the best terms with the Comtesse de Vaudremont?" said the lady, with an inquiring look at the Colonel.

"On the very best."

The unknown turned pale.

"Hallo!" thought the soldier, "she is in love with that lucky devil Martial."

"I fancied that Madame de Vaudremont had long been devoted to M. de Soulanges," said the lady, recovering a little from the suppressed grief which had clouded the fairness of her face.

"For a week past the Countess has been faithless," replied the Colonel. "But you must have seen poor Soulanges when he came in; he is still trying to disbelieve in his disaster."

"Yes, I saw him," said the lady. Then she added, "Thank

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you very much, monsieur," in a tone which signified a dismissal.

At this moment the quadrille was coming to an end. Montcornet had only time to withdraw, saying to himself by way of consolation, "She is married."

"Well, valiant Cuirassier," exclaimed the Baron, drawing the Colonel aside into a window-bay to breathe the fresh air from the garden, "how are you getting on?"

"She is a married woman, my dear fellow."

"What does that matter?"

"Oh, deuce take it! I am a decent sort of man," replied the Colonel. "I have no idea of paying my addresses to a woman I cannot marry. Besides, Martial, she expressly told me that she did not intend to dance."

"Colonel, I will bet a hundred napoleons to your gray horse that she will dance with me this evening."

"Done!" said the Colonel, putting his hand in the coxcomb's. "Meanwhile I am going to look for Soulanges; he perhaps knows the lady, as she seems interested in him."

"You have lost, my good fellow," cried Martial, laughing. "My eyes have met hers, and I know what they mean. My dear friend, you owe me no grudge for dancing with her after she has refused you?"

"No, no. Those who laugh last, laugh longest. But I am an honest gambler and a generous enemy, Martial, and I warn you, she is fond of diamonds."

With these words the friends parted; General Montcornet made his way to the cardroom, where he saw the Comte de Soulanges sitting at a *bouillotte* table. Though there was no friendship between the two soldiers, beyond the superficial comradeship arising from the perils of war and the duties of the service, the Colonel of Cuirassiers was painfully struck by seeing the Colonel of Artillery, whom he knew to be a prudent man, playing at a game which might bring him to ruin. The heaps of gold and notes piled on the fateful cards showed the frenzy of play. A circle of silent men stood round the players at the table. Now and then a few words

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were spoken—*pass, play, I stop, a thousand louis, taken*—but, looking at the five motionless men, it seemed as though they talked only with their eyes. As the Colonel, alarmed by Soulanges' pallor, went up to him, the Count was winning. Field-Marshal the Duc d'Isemberg, Keller, and a famous banker rose from the table completely cleaned out of considerable sums. Soulanges looked gloomier than ever as he swept up a quantity of gold and notes; he did not even count it; his lips curled with bitter scorn, he seemed to defy fortune rather than be grateful for her favors.

"Courage," said the Colonel. "Courage, Soulanges!" Then, believing he would do him a service by dragging him from play, he added: "Come with me. I have some good news for you, but on one condition."

"What is that?" asked Soulanges.

"That you will answer a question I will ask you."

The Comte de Soulanges rose abruptly, placing his winnings with reckless indifference in his handkerchief, which he had been twisting with convulsive nervousness, and his expression was so savage that none of the players took exception to his walking off with their money. Indeed, every face seemed to dilate with relief when his morose and crabbed countenance was no longer to be seen under the circle of light which a shaded lamp casts on a gaming-table.

"Those fiends of soldiers are always as thick as thieves at a fair!" said a diplomate who had been looking on, as he took Soulanges' place. One single pallid and fatigued face turned to the newcomer, and said with a glance that flashed and died out like the sparkle of a diamond: "When we say military men, we do not mean civil, Monsieur le Ministre."

"My dear fellow," said Montcornet to Soulanges, leading him into a corner, "the Emperor spoke warmly in your praise this morning, and your promotion to be field-marshal is a certainty."

"The Master does not love the Artillery."

"No, but he adores the nobility, and you are an aristocrat. The Master said," added Montcornet, "that the men who had

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married in Paris during the campaign were not therefore to be considered in disgrace. Well then?"

The Comte de Soulanges looked as if he understood nothing of this speech.

"And now I hope," the Colonel went on, "that you will tell me if you know a charming little woman who is sitting under a huge candelabrum——"

At these words the Count's face lighted up; he violently seized the Colonel's hand: "My dear General," said he, in a perceptibly altered voice, "if any man but you had asked me such a question, I would have cracked his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat you. I feel more like blowing out my brains this evening, I assure you, than—— I hate everything I see. And, in fact, I am going. This gaiety, this music, these stupid faces, all laughing, are killing me!"

"My poor friend!" replied Montcornet gently, and giving the Count's hand a friendly pressure, "you are too vehement. What would you say if I told you that Martial is thinking so little of Madame de Vaudremont that he is quite smitten with that little lady?"

"If he says a word to her," cried Soulanges, stammering with rage, "I will thrash him as flat as his own portfolio, even if the coxcomb were in the Emperor's lap!"

And he sank quite overcome on an easy-chair to which Montcornet had led him. The Colonel slowly went away, for he perceived that Soulanges was in a state of fury far too violent for the pleasantries or the attentions of superficial friendship to soothe him.

When Montcornet returned to the ballroom, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person on whom his eyes fell, and he observed on her face, usually so calm, some symptoms of ill-disguised agitation. A chair was vacant near hers, and the Colonel seated himself.

"I dare wager something has vexed you?" said he.

"A mere trifle, General. I want to be gone, for I have promised to go to a ball at the Grand Duchess of Berg's,

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and I must look in first at the Princesse de Wagram's. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows this, is amusing himself by flirting with the dowagers."

"That is not the whole secret of your disturbance, and I will bet a hundred louis that you will remain here the whole evening."

"Impertinent man!"

"Then I have hit the truth?"

"Well, tell me, what am I thinking of?" said the Countess, tapping the Colonel's fingers with her fan. "I might even reward you if you guess rightly."

"I will not accept the challenge; I have too much the advantage of you."

"You are presumptuous."

"You are afraid of seeing Martial at the feet——"

"Of whom?" cried the Countess, affecting surprise.

"Of that candelabrum," replied the Colonel, glancing at the fair stranger, and then looking at the Countess with embarrassing scrutiny.

"You have guessed it," replied the coquette, hiding her face behind her fan, which she began to play with. "Old Madame de Lansac, who is, you know, as malicious as an old monkey," she went on, after a pause, "has just told me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon is running into danger by flirting with that stranger, who sits here this evening like a skeleton at a feast. I would rather see a death's head than that face, so cruelly beautiful, and as pale as a ghost. She is my evil genius.—Madame de Lansac," she added, after a flash and gesture of annoyance, "who only goes to a ball to watch everything while pretending to sleep, has made me miserably anxious. Martial shall pay dearly for playing me such a trick. Urge him, meanwhile, since he is your friend, not to make me so unhappy."

"I have just been with a man who promises to blow his brains out, and nothing less, if he speaks to that little lady. And he is a man, madame, to keep his word. But then I know Martial; such threats are to him an encouragement.

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And, besides, we have wagered——" Here the Colonel lowered his voice.

"Can it be true?" said the Countess.

"On my word of honor."

"Thank you, my dear Colonel," replied Madame de Vaudremont, with a glance full of invitation.

"Will you do me the honor of dancing with me?"

"Yes; but the next quadrille. During this one I want to find out what will come of this little intrigue, and to ascertain who the little blue lady may be; she looks intelligent."

The Colonel, understanding that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, retired, well content to have begun his attack so well.

At most entertainments women are to be met who are there, like Madame de Lansac, as old sailors gather on the seashore to watch younger mariners struggling with the tempest. At this moment Madame de Lansac, who seemed to be interested in the personages of this drama, could easily guess the agitation which the Countess was going through. The lady might fan herself gracefully, smile on the young men who bowed to her, and bring into play all the arts by which a woman hides her emotion,—the Dowager, one of the most clear-sighted and mischief-loving duchesses bequeathed by the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, could read her heart and mind through it all.

The old lady seemed to detect the slightest movement that revealed the impressions of the soul. The imperceptible frown that furrowed that calm, pure forehead, the faintest quiver of the cheeks, the curve of the eyebrows, the least curl of the lips, whose living coral could conceal nothing from her,—all these were to the Duchess like the print of a book. From the depths of her large arm-chair, completely filled by the flow of her dress, the coquette of the past, while talking to a diplomate who had sought her out to hear the anecdotes she told so cleverly, was admiring herself in the younger coquette; she felt kindly to her, seeing how bravely

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she disguised her annoyance and grief of heart. Madame de Vaudremont, in fact, felt as much sorrow as she feigned cheerfulness; she had believed that she had found in Martial a man of talent on whose support she could count for adorning her life with all the enchantment of power; and at this moment she perceived her mistake, as injurious to her reputation as to her good opinion of herself. In her, as in other women of that time, the suddenness of their passions increased their vehemence. Souls which love much and love often, suffer no less than those which burn themselves out in one affection. Her liking for Martial was but of yesterday, it is true, but the least experienced surgeon knows that the pain caused by the amputation of a healthy limb is more acute than the removal of a diseased one. There was a future before Madame de Vaudremont's passion for Martial, while her previous love had been hopeless, and poisoned by Soulanges' remorse.

The old Duchess, who was watching for an opportunity of speaking to the Countess, hastened to dismiss her Ambassador; for in comparison with a lover's quarrel every interest pales, even with an old woman. To engage battle, Madame de Lansac shot at the younger lady a sardonic glance which made the Countess fear lest her fate was in the dowager's hands. There are looks between woman and woman which are like the torches brought on at the climax of a tragedy. No one who had not known that Duchess could appreciate the terror which the expression of her countenance inspired in the Countess.

Madame de Lansac was tall, and her features led people to say, "That must have been a handsome woman!" She coated her cheeks so thickly with rouge that the wrinkles were scarcely visible; but her eyes, far from gaining a factitious brilliancy from this strong carmine, looked all the more dim. She wore a vast quantity of diamonds, and dressed with sufficient taste not to make herself ridiculous. Her sharp nose promised epigram. A well-fitted set of teeth preserved a smile of such irony as recalled that of Voltaire. At

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the same time, the exquisite politeness of her manners so effectually softened the mischievous twist in her mind, that it was impossible to accuse her of spitefulness.

The old woman's eyes lighted up, and a triumphant glance, seconded by a smile, which said, "I promised you as much!" shot across the room, and brought a blush of hope to the pale cheeks of the young creature languishing under the great chandelier. The alliance between Madame de Lansac and the stranger could not escape the practised eye of the Comtesse de Vaudremont, who scented a mystery, and was determined to penetrate it.

At this instant the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, after questioning all the dowagers without success as to the blue lady's name, applied in despair to the Comtesse de Gondreville, from whom he reached only this unsatisfactory reply, "A lady whom the 'ancient' Duchesse de Lansac introduced to me."

Turning by chance towards the armchair occupied by the old lady, the lawyer intercepted the glance of intelligence she sent to the stranger; and although he had for some time been on bad terms with her, he determined to speak to her. The "ancient" Duchess, seeing the jaunty Baron prowling round her chair, smiled with sardonic irony, and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an expression that made Montcornet laugh.

"If the old witch affects to be friendly," thought the Baron, "she is certainly going to play me some spiteful trick.—Madame," he said, "you have, I am told, undertaken the charge of a very precious treasure."

"Do you take me for a dragon?" said the old lady. "But of whom are you speaking?" she added, with a sweetness which revived Martial's hopes.

"Of that little lady, unknown to all, whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has imprisoned in that corner. You, no doubt, know her family?"

"Yes," said the Duchess. "But what concern have you with a provincial heiress, married some time since, a woman of

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good birth, whom you none of you know, you men; she goes nowhere."

"Why does not she dance, she is such a pretty creature?—May we conclude a treaty of peace? If you will vouchsafe to tell me all I want to know, I promise you that a petition for the restitution of the woods of Navarreins by the Commissioners of Crown Lands shall be strongly urged on the Emperor."

The younger branch of the house of Navarreins bears quarterly with the arms of Navarreins those of Lansac, namely, azure and argent party per pale raguly, between six spear-heads in pale, and the old lady's liaison with Louis XV. had earned her husband the title of duke by royal patent. Now, as the Navarreins had not yet resettled in France, it was sheer trickery that the young lawyer thus proposed to the old lady by suggesting to her that she should petition for an estate belonging to the elder branch of the family.

"Monsieur," said the old woman with deceptive gravity, "bring the Comtesse de Vaudremont across to me. I promise you that I will reveal to her the mystery of the interesting unknown. You see, every man in the room has reached as great a curiosity as your own. All eyes are involuntarily turned towards the corner where my protégée has so modestly placed herself; she is reaping all the homage the women wished to deprive her of. Happy the man she chooses for her partner!" She interrupted herself, fixing her eyes on Madame de Vaudremont with one of those looks which plainly say, "We are talking of you."—Then she added, "I imagine you would rather learn the stranger's name from the lips of your handsome Countess than from mine."

There was such marked defiance in the Duchess' attitude that Madame de Vaudremont rose, came up to her, and took the chair Martial placed for her; then without noticing him she said, "I can guess, madame, that you are talking of me; but I admit my want of perspicacity; I do not know whether it is for good or evil."

Madame de Lansac pressed the young woman's pretty hand

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in her own dry and wrinkled fingers, and answered in a low, compassionate tone, "Poor child!"

The women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont understood that Martial was in the way, and dismissed him, saying with an imperious expression, "Leave us."

The Baron, ill-pleased at seeing the Countess under the spell of the dangerous sibyl who had drawn her to her side gave one of those looks which a man can give—potent over a blinded heart, but simply ridiculous in the eyes of a woman who is beginning to criticise the man who has attracted her.

"Do you think you can play the Emperor?" said Madame de Vaudremont, turning three-quarters of her face to fix an ironical sidelong gaze on the lawyer.

Martial was too much a man of the world, and had too much wit and acumen, to risk breaking with a woman who was in favor at Court, and whom the Emperor wished to see married. He counted, too, on the jealousy he intended to provoke in her as the surest means of discovering the secret of her coolness, and withdrew all the more willingly, because at this moment a new quadrille was putting everybody in motion.

With an air of making room for the dancing, the Baron leaned back against the marble slab of a console, folded his arms, and stood absorbed in watching the two ladies talking. From time to time he followed the glances which both frequently directed to the stranger. Then, comparing the Countess with the new beauty, made so attractive by a touch of mystery, the Baron fell a prey to the detestable self-interest common to adventurous lady-killers; he hesitated between a fortune within his grasp and the indulgence of his caprice. The blaze of light gave such strong relief to his anxious and sullen face, against the hangings of white silk moreen brushed by his black hair, that he might have been compared to an evil genius. Even from a distance more than one observer no doubt said to himself, "There is another poor wretch who seems to be enjoying himself!"

The Colonel, meanwhile, with one shoulder leaning lightly

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against the side-post of the doorway between the ballroom and the cardroom, could laugh undetected under his ample moustache; it amused him to look on at the turmoil of the dance; he could see a hundred pretty heads turning about in obedience to the figures; he could read in some faces, as in those of the Countess and his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation; and then, looking round, he wondered what connection there could be between the gloomy looks of the Comte de Soulanges, still seated on the sofa, and the plaintive expression of the fair unknown, on whose features the joys of hope and the anguish of involuntary dread were alternately legible. Montcornet stood like the king of the feast. In this moving picture he saw a complete presentment of the world, and he laughed at it as he found himself the object of inviting smiles from a hundred beautiful and elegant women. A Colonel of the Imperial Guard, a position equal to that of a Brigadier-General, was undoubtedly one of the best matches in the army.

It was now nearly midnight. The conversation, the gambling, the dancing, the flirtations, interests, petty rivalries, and scheming had all reached the pitch of ardor which makes a young man exclaim involuntarily, "A fine ball!"

"My sweet little angel," said Madame de Lansac to the Countess, "you are now at an age when in my day I made many mistakes. Seeing you just now enduring a thousand deaths, it occurred to me that I might give you some charitable advice. To go wrong at two-and twenty means spoiling your future; is it not tearing the gown you must wear? My dear, it is not till much later that we learn to go about in it without crumpling it. Go on, sweetheart, making clever enemies, and friends who have no sense of conduct, and you will see what a pleasant life you will some day be leading!"

"Oh, madame, it is very hard for a woman to be happy, do not you think?" the Countess eagerly exclaimed.

"My child, at your age you must learn to choose between pleasure and happiness. You want to marry Martial, who

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is not fool enough to make a good husband, nor passionate enough to remain a lover. He is in debt, my dear; he is the man to run through your fortune; still, that would be nothing if he could make you happy.—Do not you see how aged he is? The man must have been often ill; he is making the most of what is left him. In three years he will be a wreck. Then he will be ambitious; perhaps he may succeed. I do not think so.—What is he? A man of intrigue, who may have the business faculty to perfection, and be able to gossip agreeably; but he is too presumptuous to have any sterling merit; he will not go far. Besides—only look at him. Is it not written on his brow that, at this very moment, what he sees in you is not a young and pretty woman, but the two million francs you possess? He does not love you, my dear; he is reckoning you up as if you were an investment. If you are bent on marrying, find an older man who has an assured position and is half-way on his career. A widow's marriage ought not to be a trivial love affair. Is a mouse to be caught a second time in the same trap? A new alliance ought now to be a good speculation on your part, and in marrying again you ought at least to have a hope of being some day addressed as Madame la Maréchale!"

As she spoke, both women naturally fixed their eyes on Colonel Montcornet's handsome face.

"If you would rather play the delicate part of a flirt and not marry again," the Duchess went on, with blunt good-nature; "well! my poor child, you, better than any woman, will know how to raise the storm-clouds and disperse them again. But, I beseech you, never make it your pleasure to disturb the peace of families, to destroy unions, and ruin the happiness of happy wives. I, my dear, have played that perilous game. Dear heaven! for a triumph of vanity some poor virtuous soul is murdered—for there really are virtuous women, child,—and we may make ourselves mortally hated. I learned, a little too late, that, as the Duc d'Albe once said, one salmon is worth a thousand frogs! A genuine affection certainly brings a thousand times more happiness than the

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transient passions we may inspire.—Well, I came here on purpose to preach to you; yes, you are the cause of my appearance in this house, which stinks of the lower class. Have I not just seen actors here? Formerly, my dear, we received them in our boudoir; but in the drawing-room—never!—Why do you look at me with so much amazement? Listen to me. If you want to play with men, do not try to wring the hearts of any but those whose life is not yet settled, who have no duties to fulfil; the others do not forgive us for the errors that have made them happy. Profit by this maxim, founded on my long experience.—That luckless Soulanges, for instance, whose head you have turned, whom you have intoxicated for these fifteen months past, God knows how! Do you know at what you have struck?—At his whole life. He has been married these two years; he is worshiped by a charming wife, whom he loves, but neglects; she lives in tears and embittered silence. Soulanges has had hours of remorse more terrible than his pleasure has been sweet. And you, you artful little thing, have deserted him.—Well, come and see your work."

The old lady took Madame de Vaudremont's hand, and they rose.

"There," said Madame de Lansac, and her eyes showed her the stranger, sitting pale and tremulous under the glare of the candles, "that is my grandniece, the Comtesse de Soulanges; to-day she yielded at last to my persuasion, and consented to leave the sorrowful room, where the sight of her child gives her but little consolation. You see her? You think her charming? Then imagine, dear Beauty, what she must have been when happiness and love shed their glory on that face now blighted."

The Countess looked away in silence, and seemed lost in sad reflections.

The Duchess led her to the door into the card-room; then, after looking round the room as if in search of some one—"And there is Soulanges!" she said in deep tones.

The Countess shuddered as she saw, in the least brilliantly

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lighted corner, the pale, set face of Soulanges stretched in an easy-chair. The indifference of his attitude and the rigidity of his brow betrayed his suffering. The players passed him to and fro, without paying any more attention to him than if he had been dead. The picture of the wife in tears, and the dejected, morose husband, separated in the midst of this festivity like the two halves of a tree blasted by lightning, had perhaps a prophetic significance for the Countess. She dreaded lest she here saw an image of the revenges the future might have in store for her. Her heart has not yet so dried up that feeling and generosity were entirely excluded, and she pressed the Duchess' hand, while thanking her by one of those smiles which have a certain childlike grace.

"My dear child," the old lady said in her ear, "remember henceforth that we are just as capable of repelling a man's attentions as of attracting them."

"She is yours if you are not a simpleton." These words were whispered into Colonel Montcornet's ear by Madame de Lansac, while the handsome Countess was still absorbed in compassion at the sight of Soulanges, for she still loved him truly enough to wish to restore him to happiness, and was promising herself in her own mind that she would exert the irresistible power her charms still had over him to make him return to his wife.

"Oh! I will talk to him!" said she to Madame de Lansac.

"Do nothing of the kind, my dear!" cried the old lady, as she went back to her armchair. "Choose a good husband, and shut your door to my nephew. Believe me, my child, a wife cannot accept her husband's heart as the gift of another woman; she is a hundred times happier in the belief that she has reconquered it. By bringing my niece here I believe I have given her an excellent chance of regaining her husband's affection. All the assistance I need of you is to play the Colonel." She pointed to the Baron's friend, and the Countess smiled.

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"Well, madame, do you at last know the name of the unknown?" asked Martial, with an air of pique, to the Countess when he saw her alone.

"Yes," said Madame de Vaudremont, looking him in the face.

Her features expressed as much roguery as fun. The smile which gave life to her lips and cheeks, the liquid brightness of her eyes, were like the will-o'-the-wisp which leads travelers astray. Martial, who believed that she still loved him, assumed the coquetting graces in which a man is so ready to lull himself in the presence of the woman he loves. He said with a fatuous air:

"And will you be annoyed with me if I seem to attach great importance to your telling me that name?"

"Will you be annoyed with me," answered Madame de Vaudremont, "if a remnant of affection prevents my telling you; and if I forbid you to make the smallest advances to that young lady? It would be at the risk of your life perhaps."

"To lose your good graces, madame, would be worse than to lose my life."

"Martial," said the Countess severely, "she is Madame de Soulanges. Her husband would blow your brains out—if, indeed, you have any——"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the coxcomb. "What! the Colonel can leave the man in peace who has robbed him of your love, and then would fight for his wife! What a subversion of principles!—I beg of you to allow me to dance with the little lady. You will then be able to judge how little love that heart of ice could feel for you; for, if the Colonel disapproves of my dancing with his wife after allowing me to——"

"But she loves her husband."

"A still further obstacle that I shall have the pleasure of conquering."

"But she is married."

"A whimsical objection!"

"Ah!" said the Countess, with a bitter smile, "you punish us alike for our faults and our repentance!"

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"Do not be angry!" exclaimed Martial eagerly. "Oh, forgive me, I beseech you. There, I will think no more of Madame de Soulanges."

"You deserve that I should send you to her."

"I am off then," said the Baron, laughing, "and I shall return more devoted to you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world cannot capture the heart that is yours."

"That is to say, that you want to win Colonel Montcornet's horse?"

"Ah! Traitor!" said he, threatening his friend with his finger. The Colonel smiled and joined them; the Baron gave him the seat near the Countess, saying to her with a sardonic accent:

"Here, madame, is a man who boasted that he could win your good graces in one evening."

He went away, thinking himself clever to have piqued the Countess' pride and done Montcornet an ill turn; but, in spite of his habitual keenness, he had not appreciated the irony underlying Madame de Vaudremont's speech, and did not perceive that she had come as far to meet his friend as his friend towards her, though both were unconscious of it.

At the moment when the lawyer went fluttering up to the candelabrum by which Madame de Soulanges sat, pale, timid, and apparently alive only in her eyes, her husband came to the door of the ballroom, his eyes flashing with anger. The old Duchess, watchful of everything, flew to her nephew, begged him to give her his arm and find her carriage, affecting to be mortally bored, and hoping thus to prevent a vexatious outbreak. Before going she fired a singular glance of intelligence at her niece, indicating the enterprising knight who was about to address her, and this signal seemed to say, "There he is, avenge yourself!"

Madame de Vaudremont caught these looks of the aunt and niece; a sudden light dawned on her mind; she was frightened lest she was the dupe of this old woman, so cunning and so practised in intrigue.

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"That perfidious Duchess," said she to herself, "has perhaps been amusing herself by preaching morality to me while playing me some spiteful trick of her own."

At this thought Madame de Vaudremont's pride was perhaps more roused than her curiosity to disentangle the thread of this intrigue. In the absorption of mind to which she was a prey she was no longer mistress of herself. The Colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the embarrassment evident in the Countess' manner and speech, became more ardent and pressing. The old blasé diplomates, amusing themselves by watching the play of faces, had never found so many intrigues at once to watch or guess at. The passions agitating the two couples were to be seen with variations at every step in the crowded rooms, and reflected with different shades in other countenances. The spectacle of so many vivid passions, of all these lovers' quarrels, these pleasing revenges, these cruel favors, these flaming glances, of all this ardent life diffused around them, only made them feel their impotence more keenly.

At last the Baron had found a seat by Madame de Soulanges. His eyes stole a long look at her neck, as fresh as dew and as fragrant as field flowers. He admired close at hand the beauty which had amazed him from afar. He could see a small, well-shod foot, and measure with his eye a slender and graceful shape. At that time women wore their sash tied close under the bosom, in imitation of Greek statues, a pitiless fashion for those whose bust was faulty. As he cast furtive glances at the Countess' figure, Martial was enchanted with its perfection.

"You have not danced once this evening, madame," said he in soft and flattering tones. "Not, I should suppose, for lack of a partner?"

"I never go to parties; I am quite unknown," replied Madame de Soulanges coldly, not having understood the look by which her aunt had just conveyed to her that she was to attract the Baron.

Martial, to give himself countenance, twisted the diamond

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he wore on his left hand; the rainbow fires of the gem seemed to flash a sudden light on the young Countess' mind; she blushed and looked at the Baron with an undefinable expression.

"Do you like dancing?" asked the Provençal, to reopen the conversation.

"Yes, very much, monsieur."

At this strange reply their eyes met. The young man, surprised by the earnest accent, which aroused a vague hope in his heart, had suddenly questioned the lady's eyes.

"Then, madame, am I not overbold in offering myself to be your partner for the next quadrille?"

Artless confusion colored the Countess' white cheeks.

"But, monsieur, I have already refused one partner—a military man——"

"Was it that tall cavalry colonel whom you see over there?"

"Precisely so."

"Oh! he is a friend of mine; feel no alarm. Will you grant me the favor I dare hope for?"

"Yes, monsieur."

Her tone betrayed an emotion so new and so deep that the lawyer's world-worn soul was touched. He was overcome by shyness like a schoolboy's, lost his confidence, and his southern brain caught fire; he tried to talk, but his phrases struck him as graceless in comparison with Madame de Soulanges' bright and subtle replies. It was lucky for him that the quadrille was forming. Standing by his beautiful partner, he felt more at ease. To many men dancing is a phase of being; they think that they can more powerfully influence the heart of woman by displaying the graces of their bodies than by their intellect. Martial wished, no doubt, at this moment to put forth all his most effective seductions, to judge by the pretentiousness of his movements and gestures.

He led his conquest to the quadrille in which the most brilliant women in the room made it a point of chimerical importance to dance in preference to any other. While the orchestra played the introductory bars to the first figure,

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the Baron felt it an incredible gratification to his pride to perceive, as he reviewed the ladies forming the lines of that formidable square, that Madame de Soulanges' dress might challenge that even of Madame de Vaudremont, who, by a chance not perhaps unsought, was standing with Montcornet *vis-à-vis* to himself and the lady in blue. All eyes were for a moment turned on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur showed that she was the subject of every man's conversation with his partner. Looks of admiration and envy centered on her, with so much eagerness that the young creature, abashed by a triumph she seemed to disclaim, modestly looked down, blushed, and was all the more charming. When she raised her white eyelids it was to look at her ravished partner as though she wished to transfer the glory of this admiration to him, and to say that she cared more for his than for all the rest. She threw her innocence into her vanity; or rather she seemed to give herself up to the guileless admiration which is the beginning of love, with the good faith found only in youthful hearts. As she danced, the lookers-on might easily believe that she displayed her graces for Martial alone; and though she was modest, and new to the trickery of the ballroom, she knew as well as the most accomplished coquette how to raise her eyes to his at the right moment and drop their lids with assumed modesty.

When the movement of a new figure, invented by a dancer named Trénis, and named after him, brought Martial face to face with the Colonel—"I have won your horse," said he, laughing.

"Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs a year!" retorted Montcornet, glancing at Madame de Vaudremont.

"What do I care?" replied Martial. "Madame de Soulanges is worth millions!"

At the end of the quadrille more than one whisper was poured into more than one ear. The less pretty women made moral speeches to their partners, commenting on the budding *liaison* between Martial and the Comtesse de Soulanges. The handsomest wondered at her easy surrender. The men could

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not understand such luck as the Baron's, not regarding him as particularly fascinating. A few indulgent women said it was not fair to judge the Countess too hastily; young wives would be in a very hapless plight if an expressive look or a few graceful dancing steps were enough to compromise a woman.

Martial alone knew the extent of his happiness. During the last figure, when the ladies had to form the *moulinet*, his fingers clasped those of the Countess, and he fancied that, through the thin perfumed kid of her gloves, the young wife's grasp responded to his amorous appeal.

"Madame," said he, as the quadrille ended, "do not go back to the odious corner where you have been burying your face and your dress until now. Is admiration the only benefit you can obtain from the jewels that adorn your white neck and beautifully dressed hair? Come and take a turn through the rooms to enjoy the scene and yourself."

Madame de Soulanges yielded to her seducer, who thought she would be his all the more surely if he could only show her off. Side by side they walked two or three times amid the groups who crowded the rooms. The Comtesse de Soulanges, evidently uneasy, paused for an instant at each door before entering, only doing so after stretching her neck to look at all the men there. This alarm, which crowned the Baron's satisfaction, did not seem to be removed till he said to her, "Make yourself easy; *he* is not here."

They thus made their way to an immense picture gallery in a wing of the mansion, where their eyes could feast in anticipation on the splendid display of a collation prepared for three hundred persons. As supper was about to begin, Martial led the Countess to an oval boudoir looking on to the garden, where the rarest flowers and a few shrubs made a scented bower under bright blue hangings. The murmurs of the festivity here died away. The Countess, at first startled, refused firmly to follow the young man; but, glancing in a mirror, she no doubt assured herself that they could be seen, for she seated herself on an ottoman with a fairly good grace.

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"This room is charming," said she, admiring the sky-blue hangings looped with pearls.

"All here is love and delight!" said the Baron, with deep emotion.

In the mysterious light which prevailed he looked at the Countess, and detected on her gently agitated face an expression of uneasiness, modesty, and eagerness which enchanted him. The young lady smiled, and this smile seemed to put an end to the struggle of feeling surging in her heart; in the most insinuating way she took her adorer's left hand, and drew from his finger the ring on which she had fixed her eyes.

"What a fine diamond!" she exclaimed in the artless tone of a young girl betraying the incitement of a first temptation.

Martial, troubled by the Countess' involuntary but intoxicating touch, like a caress, as she drew off the ring, looked at her with eyes as glittering as the gem.

"Wear it," he said, "in memory of this hour, and for the love of——"

She was looking at him with such rapture that he did not end the sentence; he kissed her hand.

"You give it me?" she said, looking much astonished.

"I wish I had the whole world to offer you!"

"You are not joking?" she went on, in a voice husky with too great satisfaction.

"Will you accept only my diamond?"

"You will never take it back?" she insisted.

"Never."

She put the ring on her finger. Martial, confident of coming happiness, was about to put his hand round her waist, but she suddenly rose, and said in a clear voice, without any agitation:

"I accept the diamond, monsieur, with the less scruple because it belongs to me."

The Baron was speechless.

"Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my dressing-table, and told me he had lost it."

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"You are mistaken, madame," said Martial, nettled. "It was given me by Madame de Vaudremont."

"Precisely so," she said with a smile. "My husband borrowed this ring of me, he gave it to her, she made it a present to you; my ring has made a little journey, that is all. This ring will perhaps tell me all I do not know, and teach me the secret of always pleasing.—Monsieur," she went on, "if it had not been my own, you may be sure I should not have risked paying so dear for it; for a young woman, it is said, is in danger with you. But, you see," and she touched a spring within the ring, "here is M. de Soulanges' hair."

She fled into the crowded rooms so swiftly, that it seemed useless to try to follow her; besides, Martial, utterly confounded, was in no mood to carry the adventure further. The Countess' laugh found an echo in the boudoir, where the young coxcomb now perceived, between two shrubs, the Colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, both laughing heartily.

"Will you have my horse, to ride after your prize?" said the Colonel.

The Baron took the banter poured upon him by Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet with a good grace, which secured their silence as to the events of the evening, when his friend exchanged his charger for a rich and pretty young wife.

As the Comtesse de Soulanges drove across Paris from the Chaussée d'Antin to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was a prey to many alarms. Before leaving the Hôtel Gondreville she went through all the rooms, but found neither her aunt nor her husband, who had gone away without her. Frightful suspicions then tortured her ingenuous mind. A silent witness of her husband's torments since the day when Madame de Vaudremont had chained him to her car, she had confidently hoped that repentance would ere long restore her husband to her. It was with unspeakable repugnance that she had consented to the scheme plotted by

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her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and at this moment she feared she had made a mistake.

The evening's experience had saddened her innocent soul. Alarmed at first by the Count's look of suffering and dejection, she had become more so on seeing her rival's beauty, and the corruption of society had gripped her heart. As she crossed the Pont Royal she threw away the desecrated hair at the back of the diamond, given to her once as a token of the purest affection. She wept as she remembered the bitter grief to which she had so long been a victim, and shuddered more than once as she reflected that the duty of a woman, who wishes for peace in her home, compels her to bury sufferings so keen as hers at the bottom of her heart, and without a complaint.

"Alas!" thought she, "what can women do when they do not love? What is the fount of their indulgence? I cannot believe that, as my aunt tells me, reason is all-sufficient to maintain them in such devotion."

She was still sighing when her man-servant let down the handsome carriage-step down which she flew into the hall of her house. She rushed precipitately upstairs, and when she reached her room was startled by seeing her husband sitting by the fire.

"How long is it, my dear, since you have gone to balls without telling me beforehand?" he asked in a broken voice. "You must know that a woman is always out of place without her husband. You compromised yourself strangely by remaining in the dark corner where you had ensconced yourself."

"Oh, my dear, good Léon," said she in a coaxing tone, "I could not resist the happiness of seeing you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to this ball, and I was very happy there!"

This speech disarmed the Count's looks of their assumed severity, for he had been blaming himself while dreading his wife's return, no doubt fully informed at the ball of an infidelity he had hoped to hide from her; and, as is the way

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of lovers conscious of their guilt, he tried, by being the first to find fault, to escape her just anger. Happy in seeing her husband smile, and in finding him at this hour in a room whither of late he had come more rarely, the Countess looked at him so tenderly that she blushed and cast down her eyes. Her clemency enraptured Soulanges all the more, because this scene followed on the misery he had endured at the ball. He seized his wife's hand and kissed it gratefully. Is not gratitude often a part of love?

"Hortense, what is that on your finger that has hurt my lip so much?" asked he, laughing.

"It is my diamond which you said you had lost, and which I have found.

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont, in spite of the mutual understanding in which they had lived for a few minutes, for she was one of the victims of the terrible fire which sealed the fame of the ball given by the Austrian ambassador on the occasion of Napoleon's marriage with the daughter of the Emperor Joseph II.

July 1833.

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THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS

Dedicated to the Comtesse Clara Maffei.

IN the month of September 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only child of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Polish exile.

I allow myself to spell the names as they are pronounced, to spare the reader the sight of the fortifications of consonants by which, in the Slav languages, the vowels are protected, no doubt to secure them against loss, seeing how few they are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had dissipated almost the whole of one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly owed his alliance with a Mademoiselle de Ronquerolles. Hence Clémentine had for her uncle, on her mother's side, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and for her aunt Madame de Sérizy. On her father's side she possessed another uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, the younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had grown rich by speculations in lands and houses.

The Marquis de Ronquerolles was so unhappy as to lose both his children during the visitation of cholera. Madame de Sérizy's only son, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed in Africa at the fight by the Macta. In these days rich families run the risk of ruining their children if they have too many, or of becoming extinct if they have but one or two, a singular result of the Civil Code not foreseen by Napoleon. Thus, by accident, and in spite of Monsieur du Rouvre's reckless extravagances for Florine, one of the most charming of Paris actresses, Clémentine had become an

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heiress. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most accomplished diplomates of the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed that, to rescue their fortunes from the Marquis' clutches, they would leave them to their niece, to whom they each promised ten thousand francs a year on her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Pole, though a refugee, cost the French Government absolutely nothing. Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, connected with most of the princely houses of Germany, with the Sapiéhas, the Radziwills, the Mniszechs, the Rzewuskis, the Czartoryskis, the Leszinskis, the Lubomirskis, in short, all the great Sarmatian *skis*. But a knowledge of heraldry is not a strong point in France under Louis Philippe, and such nobility could be no recommendation to the *bourgeoisie* then in power. Besides, when, in 1833, Adam made his appearance on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati's, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a man who, having lost his political prospects, falls back on his vices and his love of pleasure. He was taken for a student.

The Polish nationality, as the result of an odious Government reaction, had fallen as low as the Republicans had tried to think it high. The strange struggle of Movement against Resistance—two words which thirty years hence will be inexplicable—made a farce of what ought to have been so worthy: the name, that is, of a vanquished nation to which France gave hospitality, for which entertainments were devised, for which every one danced or sang by subscription; a nation, in short, which at the time when, in 1796, Europe was fighting France, had offered her six thousand men, and such men!

Do not conclude from this that I mean to represent the Emperor Nicholas as being in the wrong as regards Poland, or Poland as regards the Emperor Nicholas. In the first place, it would be a silly thing enough to slip a political discussion into a tale which ought to interest or to amuse. Besides, Russia and Poland were equally right: one for aim-

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ing at unity of Empire, the other for desiring to be free again. It may be said, in passing, that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of manners instead of beating her with weapons; thus imitating the Chinese, who at last Chinesified the Tartars, and who, it is to be hoped, will do the same by the English. Poland ought to have *polished* the Russians; Poniatowski had tried it in the least temperate district of the Empire. But that gentleman was a misunderstood king—all the more so because he did not perhaps understand himself.

How was it possible not to hate the poor people who were the cause of the horrible deceit committed on the occasion of the review when all Paris was eager to rescue Poland? People affected to regard the Poles as allies of the Republican party, forgetting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Thenceforth the party of wealth poured ignoble contempt on the Pole, who had been deified but a few days since. The wind of a riot has always blown the Parisians round from north to south under every form of government. This weathercock temper of Paris opinion must be remembered if we would understand how, in 1835, the name of Pole was a word of ridicule among the race who believe themselves to be the wittiest and politest in the world, and its central luminary, in a city which, at this day, wields the sceptre of art and literature.

There are, alas! two types of Polish refugees—the republican Pole, the son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole, of the party led by Prince Czartoryski. These two kinds of Pole are as fire and water, but why blame them? Are not such divisions always to be observed among refugees whatever nation they belong to, and no matter what country they go to? They carry their country and their hatreds with them. At Brussels two French émigré priests expressed the greatest aversion for each other; and when one of them was asked his reasons, he replied, pointing to his companion in misery, "He is a Jansenist!" Dante, in his exile, would gladly have stabbed any adversary of the *Bianchi*. In this lies the rea-

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son of the attacks made on the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski by the French radicals, and that of the disapproval shown to a section of the Polish emigrants by the Cæsars of the counter and the Alexanders by letters patent.

In 1834 Adam Mitgislas Laginski was the butt of Parisian witticisms.—"He is a nice fellow though he is a Pole," said Rastignac.—"All the Poles are great lords," said Maxime de Trailles, "but this one pays his gambling debts; I begin to think that he must have had an estate."

And without offence to the exiles, it may be remarked that the levity, the recklessness, the fluidity of the Sarmatian character justified the calumnies of the Parisians, who, indeed, in similar circumstances, would be exactly like the Poles. The French aristocracy, so admirably supported by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly made no equivalent return to those who were forced to emigrate in 1832. We must have the melancholy courage to say that, in this, the Faubourg Saint-Germain remains Poland's debtor.

Was Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer? The problem long remained unsolved. Diplomatic circles, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence observed by the Emperor Nicholas, who at that time counted every Polish émigré as dead. The Tuileries, and most of those who took their cue from thence, gave an odious proof of this characteristic policy dignified by the name of prudence. A Russian prince, with whom they had smoked many cigars at the time of the emigration, was ignored because, as it seemed, he had fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas.

Thus placed between the prudence of the Court and that of diplomatic circles, Poles of good family lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis,* or frequented certain drawing-rooms which served as neutral territory for every variety of opinion. In a city of pleasure like Paris, where amusement is to be had in every rank, Polish recklessness found twice as many pretexts as it needed for leading a dissipated bachelor life. Besides, it must be said, Adam had against him at first both his appearance and his manners.

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There are two types of Pole, as there are two types of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not a beauty, she is horribly ugly—and Count Adam belongs to the second category. His face is small, somewhat sour, and looks as if it had been squeezed in a vise. His short nose, fair hair, red moustaches and beard, give him the expression of a goat; all the more so because he is short and thin, and his eyes, tinged with dingy yellow, startle you by the oblique leer which Virgil's line has made famous. How is it that, in spite of such unfavorable conditions, he has such exquisite manners and style? The solution of this mystery is given by his dress, that of a finished dandy, and by the education he owes to his mother, a Radziwill. If his courage carries him to the point of rashness, his mind is not above the current and trivial pleasantries of Paris conversation; still, he does not often find a young fellow who is his superior among men of fashion. These young men nowadays talk far too much of horses, income, taxes, and deputies, for French conversation to be what once it was. Wit needs leisure, and certain inequalities of position. Conversation is better perhaps at Petersburg and at Vienna than it is in Paris. Equals need no subtleties; they tell each other everything straight out, just as it is. Hence the ironical laughers of Paris could scarcely discern a man of family in a light-hearted student, as he seemed, who in talking passed carelessly from one subject to another, who pursued amusement with all the more frenzy because he had just escaped from great perils, and who, having left the country where his family was known, thought himself at liberty to lead an irresponsible life without risking a loss of consideration.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought a large house in the Rue de la Pépinière. Six months later it was on as handsome a footing as the richest houses in Paris. Just at the time when Laginski was beginning to be taken seriously, he saw Clémentine at the Italian opera, and fell in love with her. A year later, he married her. Madame d'Espard's circle set the fashion of approval. Mothers of families then

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learned, too late, that ever since the year 900, the Laginskis had ranked with the most illustrious families of the North. By a stroke of prudence, most unlike a Pole, the young Count's mother had, at the beginning of the rebellion, mortgaged her estates for an immense sum advanced by two Jewish houses, and invested in the French funds. Count Adam Laginski had an income of more than eighty thousand francs. This put an end to the astonishment expressed in some drawing-rooms at the rashness of Madame de Sérizy, of old de Ronquerolles, and of the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to their niece's mad passion.

As usual, the world rushed from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, Count Adam became the fashion, and Clémentine Laginski one of the queens of Paris. Madame de Laginski, at the present time, is one of the charming group of young married women among whom shine Mesdames de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the very flower of Paris society, who live high above the parvenus, bourgeois, and wire-pullers of recent politics.

This preamble was needful to define the sphere in which was carried through one of those sublime efforts, less rare than the detractors of the present time imagine,—pearls hidden in rough shells, and lost in the depths of that abyss, that ocean, that never-resting tide called the World—the Age —Paris, London, or Petersburg—whichever you will.

If ever the truth that architecture is the expression of the manners of a race was fully demonstrated, is it not since the revolution of 1830, under the reign of the House of Orleans? Great fortunes have shrunk in France, and the majestic mansions of our fathers are constantly being demolished and replaced by a sort of tenement houses, in which a peer of France of July dwells on the third floor, over some newly-enriched empiric. Styles are mingled in confusion. As there is no longer any Court, any nobility to set a "tone," no harmony is to be seen in the productions of art. On the other hand, architecture has never found more economical

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tricks for imitating what is genuine and thorough, never displayed more ingenuity and resource in arrangement. Ask an artist to deal with a strip of the garden of an old "hôtel" now destroyed, and he will build you a little Louvre crushed under its ornamentation; he will give you a courtyard, stables, and, if you insist, a garden; inside he contrives such a number of little rooms and corridors, and cheats the eye so effectually, that you fancy yourself comfortable; in fact, there are so many bedrooms, that a ducal retinue can live and move in what was only the bake-house of a president of a law court.

The Comtesse Laginski's house is one of these modern structures, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. To the right of the courtyard are the servants' quarters, balanced on the left by the stables and coach-houses. The porter's lodge stands between two handsome gates. The chief luxury of this house consists in a delightful conservatory at the end of a boudoir on the ground floor, where all the beautiful reception rooms are. It was a philanthropist driven out of England who built this architectural gem, constructed the conservatory, planned the garden, varnished the doors, paved the outbuildings with brick, filled the windows with green glass, and realized a vision like that—in due proportion—of George IV. at Brighton. The inventive, industrious, and ready Paris artisan had carved his doors and window-frames; his ceilings were imitated from those of the Middle Ages or of Venetian palaces, and there was a lavish outlay of marble slabs in external paneling. Steinbock and François Souchet had carved the cornices of the doors and chimney-shelves; Schinner had painted the ceilings with the brush of a master. The wonders of the stairs—marble as white as a woman's arm—defied those of the Hôtel Rothschild.

In consequence of the disturbances, the price of this folly was not more than eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman this was giving it away. All this splendor, called princely by people who do not know what a real prince

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is, stood in the garden of a contractor—a Crœsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels, a bankrupt after a sudden convulsion of the Bourse. The Englishman died at Paris—died of Paris—for to many people Paris is a disease; sometimes it is several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a perfect horror of the nabob's little house—this philanthropist had been a dealer in opium. The virtuous widow ordered that the scandalous property should be sold just at the time when the disturbances made peace doubtful on any terms. Count Adam took advantage of the opportunity; and you shall be told how it happened, for nothing could be less consonant with his lordly habits.

Behind this house, built of stone fretted like a melon, spreads the green velvet of an English lawn, shaded at the further end by an elegant clump of exotic trees, among which rises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bells and pendent gilt eggs. The greenhouse and its fantastic decorations screen the outer wall on the south side. The other wall, opposite the greenhouse, is hung with creepers grown in arcades over poles and cross-beams painted green. This meadow, this realm of flowers, these graveled paths, this mimic forest, these aerial trellises cover an area of about twenty-five square perches, of which the present value would be four hundred thousand francs, as much as a real forest. In the heart of this silence won from Paris, birds sing; there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, chaffinches, and numbers of sparrows. The conservatory is a vast flower-bed, where the air is loaded with perfume, and where you may walk in winter as though summer was blazing with all its fires. The means by which an atmosphere is produced at will of the tropics, China or Italy, are ingeniously concealed from view. The pipes in which the boiling water circulates—the steam, hot air, what not—are covered with soil, and look like garlands of growing flowers.

The boudoir is spacious. On a small plot of ground the miracle wrought by the Paris fairy called Architecture is to produce everything on a large scale. The young Countess'

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boudoir was the pride of the artist to whom Count Adam intrusted the task of redecorating the house. To sin there would be impossible, there are too many pretty trifles. Love would not know where to alight amid work-tables of Chinese carving, where the eye can find thousands of droll little figures wrought in the ivory—the outcome of the toil of two families of Chinese artists; vases of burnt topaz mounted on filigree stands; mosaics that invite to theft; Dutch pictures, such as Schinner now paints again; angels imagined as Steinbock conceives of them (but does not always work them out himself); statuettes executed by geniuses pursued by creditors (the true interpretation of the Arab myths); sublime first sketches by our greatest artists; fronts of carved chests let into the wainscot, and alternating with the inventions of Indian embroidery; gold-colored curtains draped over the doors from an architrave of black oak wrought with the swarming figures of a hunting scene; chairs and tables worthy of Madame de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, and so forth. And finally, as a crowning touch, all this splendor, seen under a softened light filtering in through lace curtains, looks all the more beautiful. On a marble slab, among some antiques, a lady's whip, with a handle carved by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, shows that the Countess is fond of riding.

Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of property to divert the eye, as though ennui threatened to invade the most restless and unresting society in the world. Why is there nothing individual, intimate, nothing to invite reverie and repose?—Why?—Because no one is sure of the morrow, and every one enjoys life as a prodigal spends a life interest.

One morning Clémentine affected a meditative air, as she lounged on one of those deep siesta chairs from which we cannot bear to rise, so cleverly has the upholsterer who invented them contrived to fit them to the curves of laziness and the comfort of the *Dolce far niente*. The doors to the conservatory were open, admitting the scent of vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics. The young wife watched Adam, who was smoking an elegant narghileh, the only form

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of pipe she allowed in this room. Over the other door, curtains, caught back by handsome ropes, showed two magnificent rooms beyond: one in white and gold, resembling that of the Hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other in the taste of the Renaissance. The dining-room, unrivaled in Paris by any but that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a corridor, with a ceiling and walls decorated in a mediæval style. This corridor is reached, on the courtyard front, through a large ante-room, through whose glass door the splendor of the stairs is seen.

The Count and Countess had just breakfasted; the sky was a sheet of blue without a cloud; the month of April was drawing to a close. The household had already known two years of happiness, and now, only two days since, Clémentine had discovered in her home something resembling a secret, a mystery. A Pole, let it be repeated to his honor, is generally weak in the presence of a woman; he is so full of tenderness that, in Poland, he becomes her inferior; and though Polish women are admirable creatures, a Pole is even more quickly routed by a Parisienne. Hence, Count Adam, pressed hard with questions, had not enough artless cunning to sell his secret dear to his wife. With a woman there is always something to be got for a secret; and she likes you the better for it, as a rogue respects an honest man whom he has failed to take in. The Count, more ready with his sword than with his tongue, only stipulated that he should not be required to answer till he had finished his narghileh full of *tombaki*.

"When we were traveling," said she, "you replied to every difficulty by saying, 'Paz will see to that!' You never wrote to anybody but Paz. On my return, every one refers me to *the Captain*. I want to go out.—The Captain! Is there a bill to be paid?—The Captain. If my horse's pace is rough, they will speak to Captain Paz. In short, here I feel as if it were a game of dominoes; everywhere Paz! I hear no one talked of but Paz, but I can never see Paz. What is Paz? Let our Paz be brought to see me."

"Then is not everything as it ought to be?" said the Count, relinquishing the mouthpiece of his narghileh.

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"Everything is so quite what it ought to be, that if we had two hundred thousand francs a year, we should be ruined by living in the way we do with a hundred and ten thousand," said she. She pulled the bell-handle embroidered in tent-stitch, a marvel of skill. A man-servant dressed like a Minister at once appeared.

"Tell Monsieur le Capitaine Paz that I wish to speak to him," said she.

"If you fancy you will find anything out in that way——," said Count Adam with a smile.

It may be useful to say that Adam and Clémentine, married in December 1835, after spending the winter in Paris, had during 1836 traveled in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They returned home in November, and during the winter just past the Countess had for the first time received her friends, and then had discovered the existence—the almost speechless and unacknowledged, but most useful presence—of a factotum whose person seemed to be invisible—this Captain Paz or Paç.

"Monsieur le Capitaine Paz begs Madame le Comtesse to excuse him; he is round at the stables, and in a dress which does not allow of his coming at this minute. But as soon as he is dressed Count Paz will come," said the man-servant.

"Why, what was he doing?"

"He was showing Constantine how to groom the Countess' horse; the man did not do it to his mind," replied the servant.

The Countess looked at the man; he was quite serious, and took good care not to imply by a smile that comment which inferiors so often allow themselves on a superior who seems to have descended to their level.

"Ah, he was brushing down Cora?"

"You are not riding out this morning, madame?" said the servant; but he got no answer, and went.

"Is he a Pole?" asked Clémentine of her husband, who bowed affirmatively.

Clémentine lay silent, examining Adam. Her feet, almost

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at full length on a cushion, her head in the attitude of a bird listening on the edge of its nest to the sounds of the grove, she would have seemed charming to the most blasé of men. Fair and slight, her hair curled *à l'Anglaise,* she looked like one of the almost fabulous figures in *Keepsakes,* especially as she was wrapped in a morning gown of Persian silk, of which the thick folds did not so effectually disguise the graces of her figure and the slenderness of her waist, as that they could not be admired through the thick covering of flowers and embroidery. As she crossed the brightly colored stuff over her chest, the hollow of her throat remained visible, the white skin contrasting in tone with the handsome lace trimming over the shoulders. Her eyes, fringed with black lashes, emphasized the expression of curiosity that puckered a pretty mouth. On her well-formed brow were traced the characteristic curves of the Paris woman, wilful, light-hearted, well-educated, but invulnerable to vulgar temptations. Her hands, almost transparent, hung from each arm of her deep chair; the taper fingers, curved at the tips, showed nails like pink almonds that caught the light.

Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, gazing at her with a look which conjugal satiety had not yet made lukewarm. This slim little Countess had known how to be mistress in her own house, for she scarcely acknowledged Adam's admiration. In the glances she stole at him there was perhaps a dawning consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne to this spruce, lean, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the Count, hearing a step that rang in the corridor.

The Countess saw a tall, handsome man come in, well built, bearing in his features the marks of the grief which comes of strength and misfortune. Paz had dressed hastily in one of those tightly-fitting coats, fastened by braid straps and oval buttons, which used to be called *polonaises.* Thick, black hair, but ill-kempt, covered his squarely-shaped head, and Clémentine could see his broad forehead as shiny as a piece of marble, for he held his peaked cap in his hand. That

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hand was like the hand of the Hercules carrying the infant Mercury. Robust health bloomed in a face equally divided by a large Roman nose, which reminded Clémentine of the handsome Trasteverini. A black silk stock put a finishing touch of martial appearance to this mystery of near six feet high, with jet-black eyes as lustrous as an Italian's The width of his full trousers, hiding all but the toes of his boots, showed that Paz still was faithful to the fashions of Poland. Certainly, to a romantic woman, there must have been something burlesque in the violent contrast observable between the Captain and the Count, between the little Pole with his narrow frame and this fine soldier, between the carpet-knight and the knight servitor.

"Good-morning, Adam," he said to the Count with familiarity.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what way he could serve her.

"Then you are Laginski's friend?" asked the lady.

"For life and death," replied Paz, on whom the young Count shed his most affectionate smile, as he exhaled his last fragrant puff of smoke.

"Well, then, why do you not eat with us? Why did you not accompany us to Italy and to Switzerland? Why do you hide yourself so as to avoid the thanks I owe you for the constant services you do us?" said the young Countess, with a sort of irritation, but without the slightest feeling.

In fact, she detected a kind of volunteer slavery on the part of Paz. At that time such an idea was inseparable from a certain disdain for a socially amphibious creature, a being at once secretary and bailiff, neither wholly bailiff nor wholly secretary, some poor relation—inconvenient as a friend.

"The fact is, Countess," he replied with some freedom, "that no thanks are owing to me. I am Adam's friend, and I find my pleasure in taking charge of his interests."

"And is it for your pleasure too that you remain standing?" said Count Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the doorway.

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"I remember having seen you on the occasion of our marriage, and sometimes in the courtyard," said the lady; "but why do you, a friend of Adam's, place yourself in a position of inferiority?"

"The opinion of the Paris world is to me a matter of indifference," said he. "I live for myself, or, if you choose, for you two."

"But the opinion of the world as regards my husband's friend cannot be a matter of indifference to me——"

"Oh, madame, the world is easily satisfied by one word: Eccentric—say that."

After a short pause he asked, "Do you purpose going out?"

"Will you come to the Bois?" said the Countess.

"With pleasure," and so saying Paz bowed and went out.

"What a good soul! He is as simple as a child," said Adam.

"Tell me now how you became friends," said Clémentine.

"Paz, my dearest, is of a family as old, as noble, and as illustrious as our own. At the time of the fall of the Pazzi a member of that family escaped from Florence into Poland, where he settled with some little fortune, and founded the family of the Paz, on which the title of count was conferred.

"This family, having distinguished itself in the days of our royal republic, grew rich. The cutting from the tree felled in Italy grew with such vigor that there are several branches of the house of the Counts Paz. It will not, therefore, surprise you to be told that there are rich and poor members of the family. Our Paz is the son of a poor branch. As an orphan, with no fortune but his sword, he served under the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing—three reasons for fighting well. In the last skirmish, believing his men were following him, he rushed on a Russian battery, and was taken prisoner. I was there. This feat of courage roused my blood. 'Let us go and fetch him!' cried I to my horsemen. We charged the battery like freebooters, and I rescued Paz, I

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being the seventh. We were twenty when we set out, and eight when we came back, including Paz.

"When Warsaw was betrayed we had to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance Paz and I found ourselves together at the same hour and in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor Captain arrested by some Prussians, who at that time had made themselves bloodhounds for the Russians. When one has fished a man out of the Styx, one gets attached to him. This new danger threatening Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, intending to be of service to him. Two men can sometimes escape when one alone is lost. Thanks to my name and some family connection with those on whom our fate depended—for we were then in the power of the Prussians—my flight was winked at. I got my dear Captain through as a common soldier and a servant of my house, and we succeeded in reaching Dantzic. We stowed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for England, where we landed two months later.

"My mother had fallen ill in England, and awaited me there; Paz and I nursed her till her death, which was accelerated by the disasters to our cause.

"We then left England, and I brought Paz to France; in such adversities two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris with sixty odd thousand francs a year, not to mention the remains of a sum derived from the sale of my mother's diamonds and the family pictures, I wished to secure a living to Paz before giving myself up to the dissipations of Paris life. I had discerned some sadness in the Captain's eyes, sometimes even a suppressed tear floated there. I had had opportunities of appreciating his soul, which is thoroughly noble, lofty, and generous. Perhaps it was painful to him to find himself bound by benefits to a man six years younger than himself without being able to repay him. I, careless and light-hearted as a boy, might ruin myself at play, or let myself be ensnared by some woman; Paz and I might some day be sundered. Though I promised myself that I

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would always provide for all his needs, I foresaw many chances of forgetting, or being unable to pay Paz an allowance. In short, my angel, I wished to spare him the discomfort, the humiliation, the shame of having to ask me for money, or of seeking in vain for his comrade in some day of necessity. *Dunque,* one morning after breakfast, with our feet on the fire-dogs, each smoking his pipe, after many blushes, and with many precautions, till I saw he was looking at me quite anxiously, I held out to him a bond to bearer producing two thousand four hundred francs interest yearly——"

Clémentine rose, seated herself on Adam's knees, and putting her arm round his neck, kissed him on the brow, saying:

"Dear heart, how noble I think you! And what did Paz say?"

"Thaddeus?" said the Count; "he turned pale and said nothing."

"Thaddeus—is that his name?"

"Yes.—Thaddeus folded up the paper and returned it to me, saying, 'I thought, Adam, that we were as one in life and death, and that we should never part; do you wish to see no more of me?'—'Oh,' said I, 'is that the way you take it? Well, then, say no more about it. If I am ruined, you will be ruined.'—Said he, 'You are not rich enough to live as a Laginski should; and do you not need a friend to take care of your concerns, who will be father and brother to you, and a trusted confidant?' My dear girl, Paz, as he uttered the words, spoke with a calmness of tone and look which covered a motherly feeling, but which betrayed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a dog, and the friendship of a savage, always ready and always unassuming. On my honor! I took him in our Polish fashion, laying my hand on his shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. 'For life and death, then,' said I. 'All I have is yours, do just as you will.'

"It was he who found me this house for almost nothing. He sold my shares when they were high, and bought when they were low, and we purchased this hovel out of the difference.

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He is a connoisseur in horses, and deals in them so well that my stable has cost me very little, and yet I have the finest beasts and the prettiest turnout in Paris. Our servants, old Polish soldiers whom he found, would pass through the fire for us. While I seem to be ruining myself, Paz keeps my house with such perfect order and economy that he has even made good some losses at play, the follies of a young man. My Thaddeus is as cunning as two Genoese, as keen for profit as a Polish Jew, as cautious as a good housekeeper. I have never been able to persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it has needed the gentle violence of friendship to induce him to come to the play when I was going alone, or to one of the dinners I was giving at an eating-house to a party of congenial companions. He does not like the life of drawing-rooms."

"Then what does he like?" asked Clémentine.

"He loves Poland, and weeps over her. His only extravagance has been money sent, more in my name than his own, to some of our poor exiles."

"Dear, how fond I shall be of that good fellow," said the Countess. "He seems to me as simple as everything that is truly great."

"All the pretty things you see here," said Adam, praising his friend with the most generous security, "have been found by Paz; he has bought them at sales, or by some chance. Oh! he is keener at a bargain than a trader. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, it is because he has exchanged a good horse for a better. He lives in me; his delight is to see me well dressed in a dazzlingly smart carriage. He performs all the duties he imposes on himself without fuss or display. One night I had lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I to myself as I reached home. Paz gave me the sum, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me even by a look. This sigh checked me more than all the remonstrances of uncles, wives, or mothers in similar circumstances. 'You regret the money?' I asked him.—'Oh, not for you, nor for myself; no, I was

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only thinking that twenty poor relations of mine could have lived on it for a year.'

"The family of Paz, you understand, is quite equal to that of Laginski, and I have never regarded my dear Paz as an inferior. I have tried to be as magnanimous in my degree as he in his. I never go out or come in without going to Paz, as if he were my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus knows that at this day I would rush into danger to rescue him, as I have done twice before."

"That is not a small thing to say, my dear," remarked the Countess. "Devotion is a lightning-flash. Men devote themselves in war, but they no longer devote themselves in Paris."

"Well, then," said Adam, "for Paz I am always in war. Our two natures have preserved their asperities and their faults, but the mutual intimacy of our souls has tightened the bonds, already so close, of our friendship. A man may save his comrade's life, and kill him afterwards if he finds him a bad companion; but we have gone through what makes friendship indissoluble. There is between us that constant exchange of pleasing impressions on both sides which makes friendship, from that point of view, a richer joy, perhaps, than love."

A pretty little hand shut the Count's mouth so suddenly that the movement was almost a blow.

"Yes, indeed, my darling," said he. "Friendship knows nothing of the bankruptcy of sentiment, the insolvency of pleasures. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives."

"On both sides alike then," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Yes," said Adam. "While friendship can but increase. You need not pout. We, my angel, are as much friends as lovers; we, at least, I hope, have combined the two feelings in our happy marriage."

"I will explain to you what has made you two such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference in your love arises from a difference in your tastes, and not from compulsory choice; from preference, and not from the necessity of posi-

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tion. So far as a man can be judged from a glimpse, and from what you tell me, in this instance the subaltern may at times be the superior."

"Oh! Paz is really my superior," replied Adam simply. "I have no advantage over him but that of luck."

His wife kissed him for this generous avowal.

"The perfect skill with which he conceals the loftiness of his soul is an immense superiority," the Count went on. "I say to him, 'You are a sly fellow; you have vast domains in your mind to which you retire.' He has a right to the title of Count Paz; in Paris he will only be called Captain."

"In short, a Florentine of the Middle Ages has resuscitated after three centuries," said the Countess. "There is something of Dante in him, and something of Michael Angelo."

"Indeed, you are right; he is at heart a poet," replied Adam.

"And so I am married to two Poles," said the young Countess, with a gesture resembling that of a genius on the stage.

"Darling child!" said Adam, clasping Clémentine to him, "you would have distressed me very much if you had not liked my friend. We were both afraid of that, though he was delighted at my marrying. You will make him very happy by telling him that you love him—oh! as an old friend."

"Then I will go to dress; it is fine, we will all three go out," said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

Paz led such an underground life that all the fashion of Paris wondered who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginski when they saw her driving to the Bois and back between him and her husband. During the drive Clémentine had insisted that Thaddeus was to dine with her. This whim of a despotic sovereign compelled the Captain to make an unwonted toilet. On returning from her drive Clémentine dressed with some coquettish care, in such a way as to produce as effect even on Adam as she entered the room where the two friends were awaiting her.

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"Count Paz," said she, "we will go to the opera together."

It was said in the tone which from a woman conveys, "If you refuse, we shall quarrel."

"With pleasure, madame," replied the Captain. "But as I have not a Count's fortune, call me Captain."

"Well, then, Captain, give me your arm," said she, taking it and leading him into the dining-room with a suggestion of the caressing familiarity which enraptures a lover.

The Countess placed the Captain next her, and he sat like a poor sub-lieutenant dining with a wealthy general. Paz left it to Clémentine to talk, listening to her with all the air of deference to a superior, contradicting her in nothing, and waiting for a positive question before making any reply. In short, to the Countess he seemed almost stupid, and her graces all fell flat before this icy gravity and diplomatic dignity. In vain did Adam try to rouse him by saying, "Come, cheer up, Captain. It might be supposed that you were not at home. You must have laid a bet that you would disconcert Clémentine?" Thaddeus remained heavy and half asleep.

When the three were alone at dessert the Captain explained that his life was planned diametrically unlike that of other people; he went to bed at eight o'clock, and rose at daybreak; and he thus excused himself, saying he was very sleepy.

"My intention in taking you to the opera was only to amuse you, Captain; but do just as you please," said Clémentine, a little nettled.

"I will go," said Paz.

"Duprez is singing in *William Tell*," said Adam. "Would you prefer the *Variétés*?"

The Captain smiled and rang the bell; the man-servant appeared. "Tell Constantine," said Paz, "to take out the large carriage instead of the coupé.—We cannot sit comfortably in it," he added, turning to the Count.

"A Frenchman would not have thought of that," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Ah, but we are Florentines transplanted to the North,"

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replied Thaddeus, with a meaning and an expression which showed that his dulness at dinner had been assumed.

But by a very conceivable want of judgment, there was too great a contrast between the involuntary self-betrayal of this speech and the Captain's attitude during dinner. Clémentine examined him with one of those keen flashes by which a woman reveals at once her surprise and her observancy. Thus, during the few minutes while they were taking their coffee in the drawing-room, silence reigned—an uncomfortable silence for Adam, who could not divine its cause. Clémentine no longer disturbed Thaddeus. The Captain, for his part, retired again into military rigidity, and came out of it no more, either on the way, or in the box, where he affected to be asleep.

"You see, madame, that I am very dull company," said he, during the ballet in the last act of *William Tell*. "Was I not right to 'stick to my last,' as the proverb says?"

"On my word, my dear Captain, you are neither a coxcomb nor a chatterbox; you are perhaps a Pole."

"Leave me then to watch over your pleasures," he replied, "to take care of your fortune and your house; that is all I am good for."

"Tartufe! begone!" cried Adam, smiling. "My dear, he is full of heart, well informed—he could, if he chose, hold his own in any drawing-room. Clémentine, do not believe what his modesty tells you."

"Good-night, Countess. I have proved my willingness, and now will avail myself of your carriage to go to bed at once. I will send it back for you."

Clémentine bowed slightly, and let him go without replying.

"What a bear!" said she to the Count. "You are much, much nicer."

Adam pressed his wife's hand unseen.

"Poor, dear Thaddeus, he has endeavored to be a foil when many men would have tried to seem more attractive than I."

"Oh!" said she, "I am not sure that was not intentional; his behavior would have mystified an ordinary woman."

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Half an hour later, while Boleslas the groom was calling "Gate," and the coachman, having turned the carriage to drive in, was waiting for the gates to be opened, Clémentine said to the Count:

"Where does the Captain roost?"

"Up there," said Adam, pointing to an elegantly constructed attic extending on both sides of the gateway with a window looking on to the street. "His rooms are over the coach-houses."

"And who lives in the other half?"

"No one as yet," replied Adam. "The other little suite, over the stables, will do for our children and their tutor."

"He is not in bed," said the Countess, seeing a light in the Captain's room when the carriage was under the pillared portico—copied from that at the Tuileries, and taking the place of the ordinary zinc awning painted to imitate striped ticking.

Paz, in his dressing-gown, and pipe in hand, was watching Clémentine as she disappeared into the hall. The day had been a cruel one to him. And this is the reason: Thaddeus had felt a fearful shock to his heart on the day when, Adam having taken him to the opera to pronounce his opinion, he first saw Mademoiselle du Rouvre; and again, when he saw her in the Maire's office and at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and recognized in her the woman whom a man must love to the exclusion of all others—for Don Juan himself preferred one among the *mille e tre!*

Hence Paz had strongly advocated the classical bridal tour after the wedding. Fairly easy all the time while Clémentine was absent, his tortures began again on the return of the happy couple. And this was what he was thinking as he inhaled his latakia from a cherry-stem pipe, six feet long, a gift from Adam: "Only I and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, may ever know how I love her! But how can I manage to avoid alike her love or her hatred?"

And he sat thinking, thinking, over this problem of the strategy of love.

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It must not be supposed that Thaddeus lived bereft of all joy in the midst of his pain. The triumphant cunning of this day was a source of secret satisfaction. Since the Count's return with his wife, day by day he felt ineffable happiness in seeing that he was necessary to the couple, who, but for him, would have rushed inevitably into ruin. What fortune can hold out against the extravagance of Paris life? Clémentine, brought up by a reckless father, knew nothing of household management, which nowadays the richest women and the highest in rank are obliged to undertake themselves. Who in these days can afford to keep a steward? Adam, on his part, as the son of one of the great Polish nobles who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, and who was incapable of husbanding the remains of one of the most enormous fortunes in Poland—where fortunes were enormous—was not of a temper to restrict either his own fancies or his wife's. If he had been alone, he would probably have ruined himself before his marriage. Paz had kept him from gambling on the Bourse, and does not that say all?

Consequently, when he found that, in spite of himself, he was in love with Clémentine, Paz had not the choice of leaving the house and traveling to forget his passion. Gratitude, the clue of the mystery of his life, held him to the house where he alone could act as man of business to this heedless couple. Their long absence made him hope for a calmer spirit; but the Countess came back more than ever lovely, having acquired that freedom of thought which marriage confers on the Paris woman, and displaying all the charms of a young wife, with the indefinable something which comes of happiness or of the independence allowed her by a man as trusting, as chivalrous, and as much in love as Adam was.

The consciousness of being the working hub of this magnificent house, the sight of Clémentine stepping out of her carriage on her return from a party, or setting out in the morning for the Bois de Boulogne, a glimpse of her on the Boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its nest of leaves, filled poor Thaddeus with deep, mysterious ecstasies

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which blossomed at the bottom of his heart without the slightest trace appearing in his features. How, during these five months, should the Countess ever have seen the Captain? He hid from her, concealing the care he took to keep out of her way.

Nothing is so near divine love as a hopeless love. Must not a man have some depth of soul thus to devote himself in silence and obscurity? This depth, where lurks the pride of a father—or of God—enshrines the worship of love for love's sake, as power for power's sake was the watchword of the Jesuits; a sublime kind of avarice, since it is perennially generous, and modeled indeed on the mysterious Being of the first principles of the world. Is not their result Nature? And Nature is an enchantress; she belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover; but is not the Cause superior to Nature in the sight of certain privileged souls, and some stupendous thinkers? The Cause is God. In that sphere of Causes dwelt the spirits of Newton, of Laplace, of Kepler, of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, of the true poets and saints of the second century of our era, of Saint Theresa of Spain and the sublime mystics. Every human emotion contains some analogy with the frame of mind in which the Effect is neglected in favor of the Cause, and Thaddeus has risen to the height whence all things look different. Abandoned to the unspeakable joys of creative energy, Thaddeus was, in love, what we recognize as greatest in the records of genius.

"No, she is not altogether deceived," thought he, as he watched the smoke curl from his pipe. "She might involve me in an irremediable quarrel with Adam if she spited me; and if she should flirt to torment me, what would become of me?"

The fatuity of this hypothesis was so unlike the Captain's modest nature, and his somewhat German shyness, that he was vexed with himself for its having occurred to him, and went to bed determined to await events before taking any decisive steps.

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Next morning Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and made no remark on his disobedience. That day, as it happened, was her day for being "at home," and this, with her, demanded a royal display. She did not observe the absence of Captain Paz, on whom devolved all the arrangements for these great occasions.

"Well and good!" said Paz to himself, as he heard the carriages rumble out at two in the morning; "the Countess was only prompted by a Parisian's whim or curiosity."

So the Captain fell back into his regular routine, disturbed for a day by this incident. Clémentine, diverted by the details of life in Paris, seemed to have forgotten Paz. For do you suppose that it is a mere trifle to reign over this inconstant city? Do you imagine, by any chance, that a woman risks nothing but her fortune at that absorbing game?

The winter is to a woman of fashion what, of yore, a campaign was to the soldiers of the Empire. What a work of art—of genius—is a costume or a head-dress created to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate woman wears her hard and dazzling armor of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine in the evening till two or often three in the morning. She eats little, to attract the eye by her slender shape; she cheats the hunger that attacks her during the evening with debilitating cups of tea, sweet cakes, heating ices, or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must submit to the commands of vanity. She awakes late, and thus everything is in contradiction to the laws of Nature, and Nature is ruthless.

No sooner is she up than the woman of fashion begins to dress for the morning, planning her dress for the afternoon. Must she not receive and pay visits, and go to the Bois on horseback or in her carriage? Must she not always be practising the drill of smiles, and fatigue her brain in inventing compliments which shall seem neither stale nor studied? And it is not every woman who succeeds. And then you are surprised, when you see a young woman, whom the world has welcomed in her freshness, faded and blighted at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country are

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barely enough to heal the wounds inflicted by the winter. We hear nothing talked of but dyspepsia and strange maladies, unknown to women who devote themselves to their household. Formerly a woman was sometimes seen; now she is perpetually on the stage.

Clémentine had to fight her way; she was beginning to be quoted, and amid the cares of this struggle between her and her rivals there was hardly a place for love of her husband! Thaddeus might well be forgotten. However, a month later, in May, a few days before her departure to stay at Ronquerolles in Burgundy, as she was returning from her drive she saw Thaddeus in a side alley of the Champs-Elysées,—Thaddeus, carefully dressed, and in raptures at seeing his Countess so beautiful in her phaeton, with champing horses, splendid liveries; in short, the dear people he admired so much.

"There is the Captain," said she to Adam.

"Happy fellow!" said the Count. "These are his great treats. There is not a smarter turnout than ours, and he delights in seeing everybody envying us our happiness. You have never noticed him before, but he is there almost every day."

"What can he be thinking of?" said Clémentine.

"He is thinking at this moment that the winter has cost a great deal, and that we shall save a little by staying with your old uncle Ronquerolles," said Adam.

The Countess had the carriage stopped in front of Paz, and desired him to take the seat by her side in the carriage. Thaddeus turned as red as a cherry.

"I shall poison you," he said; "I have just been smoking cigars."

"And does not Adam poison me?" she replied quickly.,

"Yes, but he is Adam," replied the Captain.

"And why should not Thaddeus enjoy the same privilege?" said the Countess with a smile.

This heavenly smile had a power which was too much for his heroic resolutions; he gazed at Clémentine with all the fire

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of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic expression of his gratitude—that of a man who lived solely by gratitude. The Countess folded her arms in her shawl, leaned back pensively against the cushions, crumpling the feathers of her handsome bonnet, and gazed out at the passers-by. This flash from a soul so noble, and hitherto so resigned, appealed to her feelings. What, after all, was Adam's great merit? Was it not natural that he should be brave and generous? But the Captain!—Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, an immense superiority over Adam. What sinister thoughts distressed the Countess when she once more observed the contrast between the fine, complete physical nature which distinguished Thaddeus and the frail constitution which, in her husband, betrayed the inevitable degeneration of aristocratic families which are so mad as to persist in intermarrying! But the Devil alone knew these thoughts, for the young wife sat with vague meditation in her eyes, saying nothing till they reached home.

"You must dine with us, or I shall be angry with you for having disobeyed me," said she as she went in. "You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know the obligations you feel to him, but I also know all we owe to you. In return for two impulses of generosity which are so natural, you are generous at all hours and day after day.—My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt de Sérizy; dress at once," she said, pressing the hand he offered to help her out of the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his room to dress, his heart at once rejoicing and oppressed by an agonizing flutter. He came down at the last moment, and all through dinner played his part of a soldier fit for nothing but to fulfil the duties of a steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe. His look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the cleverest of ambassadors next to Talleyrand, and who served de Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the high merits of Count Paz, who so modestly made himself his friend's steward.

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"And how is it that this is the first time I have ever seen Count Paz?" asked the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

"Eh! he is very sly and underhand," replied Clémentine, with a look at Paz to desire him to change his demeanor.

Alas! it must be owned, at the risk of making the Captain less interesting to the reader, Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of strong temper. He owed his apparent superiority to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and isolation at Warsaw he had read and educated himself, had compared and thought much; but the creative power which makes a great man he did not possess—can it ever be acquired? Paz was great only through his feelings, and there could rise to the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiment, being a man of action rather than of ideas, he kept his thoughts to himself. His thoughts, then, did nothing but eat his heart out.

And what, after all, is an unuttered thought?

At Clémentine's speech the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged glances, with a side look at their niece, Count Adam, and Paz. It was one of those swift dramas which are played only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two parts of the world—excepting at all courts—can the eyes say as much. To infuse into the eye all the power of the soul, to give it the full value of speech and throw a poem or a drama into a single flash, excessive servitude or excessive liberty is needed.

Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and the Countess did not perceive this flash of observation between a past coquette and an old diplomatist; but Paz, like a faithful dog, understood its forecast. It was, you must remember, an affair of two seconds. To describe the hurricane that ravaged the Captain's heart would be too elaborate for these days.

"What! the uncle and aunt already fancy that she perhaps loves me?" said he to himself. "My happiness then depends only on my own audacity.—And Adam! . . ."

Ideal love and mere desire, both quite as potent as friendship and gratitude, rent his soul, and for a moment love had

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the upper hand. This poor heroic lover longed to have his day! Paz became witty; he intended to please, and in answer to some question from Monsieur de Ronquerolles he sketched in grand outlines the Polish rebellion. Thus, at dessert, Paz saw Clémentine hanging on his lips, regarding him as a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after sacrificing a third of his immense fortune, had taken the risks of exile. At nine o'clock, having taken coffee, Madame de Sérizy kissed her niece on the forehead and took leave, carrying off Count Adam with an assertion of authority, and leaving the Marquis du Rouvre and M. de Ronquerolles, who withdrew ten minutes later. Paz and Clémentine were left together.

"I will bid you good-night, madame," said Thaddeus; "you will join them at the opera."

"No," replied she. "I do not care for dancing, and they are giving an odious ballet this evening, *The Revolt of the Seraglio.*"

There was a moment's silence.

"Two years ago Adam would not have gone without me," she went on, without looking at Paz.

"He loves you to distraction——" Thaddeus began.

"Oh! it is because he loves me to distraction that by to-morrow he will perhaps have ceased to love me!" exclaimed the Countess.

"The women of Paris are inexplicable," said Thaddeus. "When they are loved to distraction, they want to be loved rationally; when they are loved rationally, they accuse a man of not knowing how to love."

"And they are always right, Thaddeus," she replied with a smile. "I know Adam well; I owe him no grudge for it; he is fickle, and, above all, a great gentleman; he will always be pleased to have me for his wife, and will never thwart me in any of my tastes; but——"

"What marriage was ever without a but?" said Thaddeus gently, trying to give the Countess' thoughts another direction.

The least conceited man would perhaps have had the

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thought which nearly drove this lover mad: "If I do not tell her that I love her," said he to himself, "I am an idiot!"

There was silence between these two, one of those terrible pauses which seem bursting with thoughts. The Countess fixed a covert gaze on Paz, and Paz watched her in a mirror. Sitting back in his armchair, like a man given up to digestion, in the attitude of an old man or an indifferent husband, the Captain clasped his hands over his stomach, and mechanically twirled his thumbs, looking stupidly at their rapid movement.

"But say something good about Adam!" exclaimed Clémentine. "Tell me that he is not fickle, you who know him so well."

The appeal was sublime.

"This is the opportunity for raising an insurmountable barrier between us," thought the unhappy Paz, devising a heroic lie.—"Something good?" he said aloud. "I love him too well, you would not believe me. I am incapable of telling you any evil of him. . . . And so . . . Madame, I have a hard part to play between you two."

Clémentine looked down, fixing her eyes on his patent leather shoes.

"You northerners have mere physical courage, you have no constancy in your decisions," said she in a low tone.

"What are you going to do alone, madame?" replied Paz, with a perfectly ingenuous expression.

"You are not going to keep me company?"

"Forgive me for leaving you."

"Why! where are you going?"

"I am going to the circus; it is the first night, in the Champs-Elysées, and I must not fail to be there . . ."

"Why not?" asked Clémentine, with a half-angry flash.

"Must I lay bare my heart?" he replied, coloring, "and confide to you what I conceal from my dear Adam, who believes that I love Poland alone?"

"What! our dear, noble Captain has a secret?"

"A disgrace which you will understand, and for which you can comfort me."

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"A disgrace!—You? . . ."

"Yes, I—Count Paz, am madly in love with a girl who was touring round France with the Bouthor family, people who have a circus after the pattern of Franconi's, but who only perform at fairs! I got her an engagement from the manager of the Cirque-Olympique."

"Is she handsome?" asked the Countess.

"In my eyes," he replied sadly. "Malaga, that is her name to the public, is strong, nimble, and supple. Why do I prefer her to every other woman in the world?—Indeed, I cannot tell you. When I see her with her black hair tied back with blue ribbons that float over her bare olive-tinted shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a gilt border, and silk tights which make her appear a living Greek statue, her feet in frayed satin slippers, flourishing flags in her hand to the sound of a military band, and flying through an enormous hoop covered with paper which crashes in the air—when her horse rushes round at a gallop, and she gracefully drops on to him again, applauded, honestly applauded, by a whole people—well, it excites me."

"More than a woman at a ball?" said Clémentine, with insinuating surprise.

"Yes," said Paz in a choked voice. "This splendid agility, this unfailing grace in constant peril, seem to me the greatest triumph of woman. Yes, madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Ellsler, all who reign or ever reigned on the boards, seem to me unworthy to untie Malaga's shoe strings—Malaga, who can mount or dismount a horse at a mad gallop, who slips under him from the left to reappear on the right, who flutters about the most fiery steed like a white will-o'-the-wisp, who can stand on the tip of one toe and then drop, sitting with her feet hanging, on a horse still galloping round, and who finally stands on his back without any reins, knitting a stocking, beating eggs, or stirring an omelette, to the intense admiration of the people, the true people, the peasantry and soldiers. During the walk round, madame, that enchanting Columbine used to carry chairs

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balanced on the tip of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose I ever saw. Malaga is dexterity personified. Her strength is Herculean; with her tiny fist or her little foot she can shake off three or four men. She is the goddess of athletics."

"She must be stupid."

"Oh!" cried Paz, "she is as amusing as the heroine of *Peveril of the Peak*. As heedless as a gypsy, she says everything that comes into her head; she cares no more for the future than you care for the halfpence you throw to a beggar, and she lets out really sublime things. Nothing will ever convince her that an old diplomate is a handsome young man, and a million of francs would not make her change her opinion. Her love for a man is a perpetual flattery. Enjoying really insolent health, her teeth are two-and-thirty Oriental pearls set in coral. Her 'snout'—so she calls the lower part of her face—is, as Shakespeare has it, as fresh and sweet as a heifer's muzzle. And it can give bitter pain! She respects fine men, strong men—an Adolphus, an Augustus, an Alexander—acrobats and tumblers. Her teacher, a horrible Cassandro, thrashed her unmercifully; it cost thousands of blows to give her such agility, grace, and intrepidity."

"You are drunk with Malaga!" said the Countess.

"Her name is Malaga only on the posters," said Paz, with a look of annoyance. "She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in velvet and silk, like a princess. She leads two lives—one as a dancer, and one as a pretty woman."

"And does she love you?"

"She loves me—you will laugh—solely because I am a Pole. She sees in every Pole a Poniatowski, as he is shown in the print, jumping into the Elster; for to every Frenchman the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown, is a foaming torrent which swallowed up Poniatowski.—And with all this I am very unhappy, madame——"

Clémentine was touched by a tear of rage in the Captain's eye.

"You love the extraordinary, you men," said she.

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"And you?" asked Thaddeus.

"I know Adam so well that I know he could forget me for some acrobatic tumbler like your Malaga. But where did you find her?"

"At Saint-Cloud, last September, at the fair. She was standing in a corner of the platform covered with canvas where the performers walk round. Her comrades, all dressed as Poles, were making a terrific Babel. I saw her silent and dreamy, and fancied I could guess that her thoughts were melancholy. Was there not enough to make her so—a girl of twenty? That was what touched me."

The Countess was leaning in a bewitching attitude, pensive, almost sad.

"Poor, poor Thaddeus!" she exclaimed. And with the good-fellowship of a really great lady, she added, not without a meaning smile, "Go; go to the circus!"

Thaddeus took her hand and kissed it, dropping a hot tear, and then went out. After having invented a passion for a circus-rider, he must give it some reality. Of his whole story nothing had been true but the minute's attention he had given to the famous Malaga, the rider of the Bouthor troupe at Saint-Cloud; her name had just caught his eye on an advertisement of the circus. The clown, bribed by a single five-franc piece, had told Paz that the girl was a foundling, or had perhaps been stolen.

Thaddeus now went to the circus and saw the handsome horsewoman again. For ten francs, a groom—they fill the place of dressers at a circus—informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived at the Rue des Fossés-du-Temple, on a fifth floor.

Next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to that quarter, and asked for Mademoiselle Turquet, in summer the understudy of the principal rider at the cirque, and in winter "a super" in a Boulevard theatre.

"Malaga!" shouted the doorkeeper, rushing into the attic, "here is a fine gentleman for you! He is asking Chapuzot all about you; and Chapuzot is cramming him to give me time to let you know."

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"Thank you, M'ame Chapuzot; but what will he say to find me ironing my gown?"

"Pooh, stuff! When a man is in love, he loves everything about you."

"Is he an Englishman? They are fond of horses."

"No. He looks to me like a Spaniard."

"So much the worse. The Spaniards are down in the market they say.—Stay here, Madame Chapuzot, I shall not look so left to myself."

"Who were you wanting, monsieur?" said the woman, opening the door to Thaddeus.

"Mademoiselle Turquet."

"My child," said the porter's wife, wrapping her shawl round her, "here is somebody asking for you."

A rope on which some linen was airing knocked off the Captain's hat.

"What is your business, monsieur?" asked Malaga, picking it up.

"I saw you at the circus; you remind me, mademoiselle, of a daughter I lost; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you are so wonderfully like, I should wish to be of use to you if you will allow me."

"Well, to be sure! But sit down, Monsieur le Général," said Madame Chapuzot. "You cannot say fairer—nor handsomer."

"I am not by way of love-making, my good lady," said Paz. "I am a father in deep distress, eager to be cheated by a likeness."

"And so I am to pass as your daughter?" said Malaga, very roguishly, and without suspecting the absolute truth of the statement.

"Yes," said Paz. "I will come sometimes to see you; and that the illusion may be perfect, I will place you in handsome lodgings, nicely furnished——"

"I shall have furniture of my own?" said Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

"And servants," Paz went on; "and live quite at your ease."

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Malaga looked at the stranger from under her brows.

"From what country are you, monsieur?"

"I am a Pole."

"Then I accept," said she.

Paz went away, promising to call again.

"That is a tough one!" said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Madame Chapuzot. "But I am afraid this man is wheedling me to humor some fancy. Well, I will risk it."

A month after this whimsical scene, the fair circus-rider was established in rooms charmingly furnished by Count Adam's upholsterer, for Paz wished that his folly should be talked about in the Laginski household. Malaga, to whom the adventure was like an Arabian Nights' dream, was waited on by the Chapuzot couple—at once her servants and her confidants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet expected some startling climax; but at the end of three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzots could account for the Polish Count's fancy. Paz would spend about an hour there once a week, during which he sat in the drawing-room, never choosing to go either into Malaga's boudoir nor into her bedroom, which, in fact, he never entered in spite of the cleverest manœuvring on her part and on that of the Chapuzots. The Count inquired about the little incidents that varied the horsewoman's life, and on going away he always left two forty-franc pieces on the chimney-shelf.

"He looks dreadfully bored," said Madame Chapuzot.

"Yes," replied Malaga, "that man is as cold as frost after a thaw."

"He is a jolly good fellow, all the same," cried Chapuzot, delighted to see himself dressed in blue Elbeuf cloth, and as smart as a Minister's office-messenger.

Paz, by his periodical tribute, made Marguerite Turquet an allowance of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, added to her small earnings at the circus, secured her a splendid existence as compared with her past squalor. Strange tales were current among the performers at the circus as to Malaga's good fortune. The girl's vanity allowed her

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rent to be stated at sixty thousand francs, instead of the modest six thousand which her rooms cost the prudent Captain. According to the clowns and supers, Malaga ate off silver plate; and she certainly came to the circus in pretty burnouses, in shawls, and elegant scarfs. And, to crown all, the Pole was the best fellow a circus-rider could come across; never tiresome, never jealous, leaving Malaga perfect freedom.

"Some women are so lucky!" said Malaga's rival. "Such a thing would never happen to me, though I bring in a third of the receipts."

Malaga wore smart "coal-scuttles," and sometimes gave herself airs in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the youth of fashion began to observe her. In short, Malaga was talked about in the flash world of equivocal women, and her good fortune was attacked by calumny. She was reported to be a somnambulist, and the Pole was said to be a magnetizer in search of the Philosopher's Stone. Other comments of a far more venomous taint made Malaga more inquisitive than Psyche; she reported them, with tears, to Paz.

"When I owe a woman a grudge," said she to conclude, "I do not calumniate her, I do not say that a man magnetizes her to find stones. I say that she is a bad lot, and I prove it. Why do you get me into trouble?"

Paz was cruelly speechless.

Madame Chapuzot succeeded at last in discovering his name and title. Then, at the Hôtel Laginski, she ascertained some positive facts: Thaddeus was unmarried, he was not known to have a dead daughter either in Poland or France. Malaga could not help feeling a thrill of terror.

"My dear child," said Madame Chapuzot, "that monster——"

A man who was satisfied with gazing at a beautiful creature like Malaga—gazing at her by stealth—from under his brows —not daring to come to any decision—without any confidence; such a man, in Madame Chapuzot's mind, must be a monster. "That monster is breaking you in, to lead you on to something illegal or criminal. God above us! if you

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were to be brought up at the Assizes—and it makes me shudder from head to foot to think of it, I quake only to speak of it—or in the Criminal Court, and your name was in the newspapers! . . . Do you know what I should do in your place? Well, in your place, to make all safe, I should warn the police."

One day, when mad notions were fermenting in Malaga's brain, Paz having laid his gold pieces on the velvet chimney-shelf, she snatched up the money and flung it in his face, saying, "I will not take stolen money!"

The Captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots, and came no more.

Clémentine was spending the summer on the estate of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy.

When the troupe at the circus no longer saw Thaddeus in his seat, there was a great talk among the artists. Malaga's magnanimity was regarded as folly by some, as cunning by others. The Pole's behavior, as explained to the most experienced of the women, seemed inexplicable. In the course of a single week, Thaddeus received thirty-seven letters from women of the town. Happily for him, his singular reserve gave rise to no curiosity in fashionable circles, and remained the subject of discussion in the flash set only.

Two months later, the handsome rider, swamped in debt, wrote to Count Paz the following letter, which the dandies of the day regarded as a masterpiece:—

"You, whom I still venture to call my friend, will you not take pity on me after what passed between us, which you took so ill? My heart disowns everything that could hurt your feelings. If I was so happy as to make you feel some charm when you sat near me, as you used to do, come again . . . otherwise, I shall sink into despair. Poverty has come upon me already, and you do not know what stupid things it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring for two sous and one sou's worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you love? The Chapuzots have left me after

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seeming so devoted to me. Your absence has shown me the shallowness of human attachment. A bailiff, who turned a deaf ear to me, has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no pity, and of the jeweler, who will not wait even ten days; for with you men, credit vanishes with confidence. What a position for a woman who has nothing to reproach herself for but a little amusement! My dear friend, I have taken everything of any value to my uncle's; I have nothing left but my memory of you, and the hard weather is coming on. All through the winter I shall have no fire, since nothing but melodrama is played at the Boulevard, in which I have nothing to do but tiny parts, which do not show a woman off. How could you misunderstand my noble feelings towards you, for, after all, we have not two ways of expressing our gratitude? How is it that you, who seemed so pleased to see me comfortable, could leave me in misery? Oh, my only friend on earth, before I go back to travel from fair to fair with the Bouthors—for so, at any rate, I can make my living—forgive me for wanting to know if I have really lost you for ever. If I should happen to think of you just as I was jumping through the hoop, I might break my legs by missing time. Come what may, I am yours for life.

"MARGUERITE TURQUET."

"This letter," exclaimed Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, "is well worth my ten thousand francs."

Clémentine came home on the following day, and Paz saw her once more, lovelier and more gracious than ever. During dinner the Countess preserved an air of perfect indifference towards Thaddeus, but a scene took place between the Count and his wife after their friend had left. Thaddeus, with an affectation of asking Adam's advice, had left Malaga's letter in his hands, as if by accident.

"Poor Thaddeus!" said Adam to his wife, after seeing Paz make his escape. "What a misfortune for a man of his superior stamp to be the plaything of a ballet-girl of the lowest class! He will love anything; he will degrade himself;

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he will be unrecognizable before long. Here, my dear, read that," and he handed her Malaga's letter.

Clémentine read the note, which smelt of tobacco, and tossed it away with disgust.

"However thick the bandage over his eyes may be, he must have found something out. Malaga must have played him some faithless trick."

"And he is going back to her!" cried Clémentine. "He will forgive her! You men can have no pity for any but those horrible women."

"They want it so badly!" said Adam.

"Thaddeus did himself justice—by keeping to himself!" said she.

"Oh, my dearest, you go too far," said the Count, who, though he was at first delighted to lower his friend in his wife's eyes, would not the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam well, had begged for absolute secrecy; he had only spoken, he said, as an excuse for his dissipations, and to beg his friend to allow him to have a thousand crowns for Malaga.

"He is a man of great pride," Adam went on.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, to have spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and to wait for such a letter as that to rouse him before taking her the money to pay her debts! For a Pole, on my honor! . . ."

"But he may ruin you!" said Clémentine in the acrid tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her cat-like distrustfulness.

"Oh! I know him," said Adam. "He would sacrifice Malaga to us."

"We shall see," replied the Countess.

"If it were needful for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to give her up. Constantine tells me that during the time when he was seeing her, Paz, usually so sober, sometimes came in quite fuddled. If he allowed himself to take to drink, I should be as much grieved as if he were my son."

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"Do not tell me any more!" cried the Countess with another gesture of disgust.

Two days later the Captain could see in her manner, in the tone of her voice, in her eyes, the terrible results of Adam's betrayal. Scorn had opened gulfs between him and this charming woman. And he fell forthwith into deep melancholy, devoured by this thought, "You have made yourself unworthy of her." Life became a burden to him; the bright sunshine was gloomy in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter thought, he had some happy moments: he could now give himself up without danger to his admiration for the Countess, who never paid him the slightest attention when, at a party, hidden in a corner, mute, all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her movements, not a note of her song when she sang. He lived in this enchanting life: he might himself groom the horse that she was to ride, and devote himself to the management of her splendid house with redoubled care for its interests.

These unspoken joys were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose child never knows anything of his mother's heart: for is it knowledge so long as even one thing remains unknown? Was not this finer than Petrarch's chaste passion for Laura, which, after all, was well repaid by a wealth of glory, and by the triumph of the poetry she had inspired? Was not the emotion which Assas felt in dying, in truth a whole life? This emotion Paz felt every day without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

What is there in love, that Paz, notwithstanding these secret delights, was consumed by sorrow? The Catholic religion has so elevated love that she has married it inseparably, so to speak, to esteem and generosity. Love does not exist apart from the fine qualities of which man is proud, and so rarely are we loved if we are contemned, that Thaddeus was perishing of his self-inflicted wounds. Only to hear her say that she could have loved him, and then to die! The hapless lover would have thought his life well paid for. The torments of his previous position seemed to him preferable

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to living close to her, loading her with his generosity without being appreciated or understood. In short, he wanted the price of his virtue.

He grew thin and yellow, and fell so thoroughly ill, consumed by low fever, that during the month of January he kept his bed, though refusing to see a physician. Count Adam grew extremely uneasy about his poor Thaddeus. The Countess then was so cruel as to say, when they were together one day, "Let him alone; do not you see that he has some Olympian remorse?"

This speech stung Thaddeus to the courage of despair; he got up, went out, tried some amusement, and recovered his health.

In the month of February Adam lost a rather considerable sum at the Jockey Club, and, being afraid of his wife, he begged Thaddeus to place this sum to the account of his extravagance for Malaga.

"What is there strange in the notion that the ballet-girl should have cost you twenty thousand francs? It concerns on one but me. Whereas, if the Countess should know that I had lost it at play, I should fall in her esteem, and she would be in alarm for the future."

"This to crown all!" cried Thaddeus, with a deep sigh.

"Ah! Thaddeus, this service would make us quits if I were not already the debtor."

"Adam, you may have children. Give up gambling," said his friend.

"Twenty thousand francs more that Malaga has cost us!" exclaimed the Countess some days after, on discovering Adam's generosity to Paz. "And ten thousand before—that is thirty thousand in all! Fifteen hundred francs a year, the price of my box at the Italian opera, a whole fortune to many people. . . . Oh! you Poles are incomprehensible!" cried she, as she picked some flowers in her beautiful conservatory. "You care no more than that!"

"Poor Paz——"

"Poor Paz, poor Paz!" she echoed, interrupting him.

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"What good does he do us? I will manage the house myself! Give him the hundred louis a year that he refused, and let him make his own arrangements with the Olympic Circus."

"He is of the greatest use to us; he has saved us at least forty thousand francs this year. In short, my dearest, he has placed a hundred thousand francs for us in Nucingen's bank, and a steward would have netted them."

Clémentine was softened, but she was not the less hard on Thaddeus.

Some days after she desired Paz to come to her in her boudoir, where, a year since, she had been startled by comparing him with the Count. This time she received him alone, without any suspicion of danger.

"My dear Paz," said she, with the careless familiarity of fine folks to their inferiors, "if you love Adam as you say you do, you will do one thing which he will never ask, but which I, as his wife, do not hesitate to require of you——"

"It is about Malaga?" said Thaddeus with deep irony.

"Well, yes, it is," she said. "If you want to end your days with us, if you wish that we should remain friends, give her up. How can an old soldier——"

"I am but five-and-thirty, and have not a gray hair!"

"You look as if you had," said she, "and that is the same thing. How can a man so capable of putting two and two together, so superior . . ."

What was horrible was that she spoke the word with such an evident intention of rousing in him the nobleness of soul which she believed to be dead.

"So superior as you are," she went on, after a little pause, which a gesture from Paz forced from her, "allow yourself to be entrapped like a boy. Your affair with her has made Malaga famous.—Well! My uncle wanted to see her, My uncle is not the only one; Malaga is very ready to receive all these gentlemen.—I believed you to be high-minded.—Take shame to yourself! Come, would she be an irreparable loss to you?"

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"Madame, if I knew of any sacrifice by which I might recover your esteem, it would soon be made; but to give up Malaga is not a sacrifice——"

"In your place that is what I should say if I were a man," replied Clémentine. "Well, but if I take it as a great sacrifice, there is nothing to be angry at."

Paz went away, fearing he might do some mad act; he felt his brain invaded by crazy notions He went out for a walk, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but failed to cool the burning of his face and brow. "I believed you to be high-minded!" He heard the words again and again. "And scarcely a year ago," said he to himself, "to hear Clémentine, I had beaten the Russians single-handed!" He thought of quitting the Laginski household, of asking to be sent on service in the Spahi regiment, and getting himself killed in Africa; but a dreadful fear checked him: "What would become of them without me? They would soon be ruined. Poor Countess, what a horrible life it would be for her to be reduced even to thirty thousand francs a year! Come," said he to himself, "since she can never be yours, courage, finish your work!"

As all the world knows, since 1830 the Carnival in Paris has grown to prodigious proportions, making it European, and burlesque, and animated to a far greater degree than the departed carnivals of Venice. Is this because, since fortunes have so enormously diminished, Parisians have thought of amusing themselves collectively, just as in their clubs they have a drawing-room without any mistress of the house, without politeness, and quite cheap? Be this as it may, the month of March was prodigal of those balls, where dancing, farce, coarse fun, delirium, grotesque figures, and banter made keen by Paris wit, achieved gigantic results. This madness had its Pandemonium at that time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and its Napoleon in Musard, a little man born to rule an orchestra as tremendous as the rampant mob, and to conduct a galop—that whirl of witches at their Sabbath, and one of Auber's triumphs, for the galop derived its form and

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its poetry from the famous galop in *Gustavus*. May not this vehement finale serve as a symbol of an age when, for fifty years, everything has rushed on with the swiftness of a dream?

Now, our grave Thaddeus, bearing an immaculate image in his heart, went to Malaga to invite her, the queen of carnival dancing, to spend an evening at Musard's as soon as he learned that the Countess, disguised to the teeth, was intending to come with two other young ladies, escorted by their husbands, to see the curious spectacle of one of these monster balls. On Shrove Tuesday night, in the year of grace 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the Countess, wrapped in a black domino, and seated on a bench of one of the amphitheatres of the Babylonian hall where Valentino has since given his concerts, saw Thaddeus, dressed as Robert Macaire, leading the circus-rider in the costume of a savage, her head dressed with nodding plumes like a horse at a coronation, and leaping among the groups like a perfect Jack-o'-lantern.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clémentine to her husband, "you Poles are not men of character. Who would not have felt sure of Thaddeus? He gave me his word, not knowing that I should be here and see all without being seen."

Some days after this she invited Paz to dinner. After dinner, Adam left them together, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a way as to make him feel that she would no longer have him about the house.

"Indeed, madame," said Thaddeus humbly, "you are quite right. I am a wretch; I had pledged my word. But what can I do? I put off the parting with Malaga till after the Carnival. . . . And I will be honest with you; the woman has so much power over me . . ."

"A woman who gets herself turned out of Musard's by the police, and for such dancing?"

"I admit it; I sit condemned; I will quit your house. But you know Adam. If I hand over to you the conduct of your affairs, you will have to exert great energy. Though

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I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to keep an eye on your concerns, how to manage your household, and superintend the smallest details. Allow me then to remain till I have seen you qualified to continue my system of management. You have now been married three years, and are safe from the first follies consequent on the honeymoon. The ladies of Paris society, even with the highest titles, understand very well in these days how to control a fortune and a household. . . . Well, as soon as I am assured, not of your capacity, but of your firmness, I will leave Paris."

"It is Thaddeus of Warsaw that speaks, not Thaddeus of the circus. Come back to us cured."

"Cured?—Never!" said Paz, his eyes fixed on Clémentine's pretty feet. "You cannot know, Countess, all the spice, the unexpectedness there is in that woman's wit." And feeling his courage fail him, he added: "There is not a single woman of fashion, with her prim airs, who is worth that frank young animal nature."

"In fact, I should not choose to have anything in me of the animal!" said the Countess, with a flashing look like an adder in a rage.

After that day Count Paz explained to Clémentine all her affairs, made himself her tutor, taught her the difficulties of managing her property, the real cost of things, and the way to avoid being too extensively robbed by her people. She might trust Constantine, and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained Constantine. By the month of May he thought the Countess perfectly capable of administering her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those clear-sighted women whose instincts are alert, with an inborn genius for household rule.

The situation thus naturally brought about by Thaddeus took a sudden turn most distressing for him, for his sufferings were not so light as he made them seem. The hapless lover had not reckoned with accident. Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of leaving, installed himself as his

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friend's sick-nurse. His devotedness was indefatigable. A woman who had had an interest in looking through the telescope of foresight would have seen in the Captain's heroism the sort of punishment which noble souls inflict on themselves to subdue their involuntary thoughts of sin; but women see everything or nothing, according to their frame of mind; love is their sole luminary.

For forty-five days Paz watched and nursed Mitgislas without seeming to have a thought of Malaga, for the excellent reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, seeing Adam at death's door, and yet not dead, had a consultation of the most famous doctors.

"If he gets through this," said the most learned of the physicians, "it can only be by an effort of nature. It lies with those who nurse him to watch for the moment and aid nature. The Count's life is in the hands of his attendants."

Thaddeus went to communicate this verdict to Clémentine, who was sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much to rest after her fatigues as to leave the field free for the doctors, and not to be in their way. As he trod the graveled paths leading from the boudoir to the rockery on which the Chinese summer house was built, Clémentine's lover felt as though he were in one of the gulfs described by Alighieri. The unhappy man had never foreseen the chance of becoming Clémentine's husband, and he had bogged himself in a swamp of mud. When he reached her his face was set, sublime in its despair. Like Medusa's head, it communicated terror.

"He is dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given no hope; at least, they leave it to nature. Do not go in just yet. They are still there, and Bianchon himself is examining him."

"Poor fellow!—I wonder whether I have ever worried him," she said.

"You have made him very happy; be quite easy on that point," said Thaddeus; "and you have been indulgent to him——"

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"The loss will be irreparable."

"But, dear lady, supposing the Count should die, had you not formed your opinion of him?"

"I do not love him blindly," she said; "but I loved as a wife ought to love her husband."

"Then," said Thaddeus, in a voice new to Clémentine's experience of him, "you ought to feel less regret than if you were losing one of those men who are a woman's pride, her love, her whole life! You may be frank with such a friend as I am. . . . I shall regret him—I! Long before your marriage I had made him my child, and I have devoted my life to him. I shall have no interest left on earth. But life still has charms for a widow of four-and-twenty."

"Why, you know very well that I love no one," said she, with the roughness of sorrow.

"You do not know yet what it is to love," said Thaddeus.

"Oh! husband for husband, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. For nearly a month now we have been asking ourselves, 'Will he live?' These fluctuations have prepared me, as they have you, for this end. I may be frank with you?—Well, then, I would give part of my life to save Adam's. Does not independence for a woman, here in Paris, mean liberty to be gulled by the pretence of love in men who are ruined or profligate? I have prayed God to spare me my husband—so gentle, such a good fellow, so little fractious, and who was beginning to be a little afraid of me."

"You are honest, and I like you the better for it," said Thaddeus, taking Clémentine's hands, which she allowed him to kiss. "In such a solemn moment there is indescribable satisfaction in finding a woman devoid of hypocrisy. It is possible to talk to you.—Consider the future; supposing God should not listen to you—and I am one of those who are most ready to cry to Him: Spare my friend!—for these fifty nights past have not made my eyes heavy, and if thirty days' and thirty nights' more care are needed, you, madame, may sleep while I watch. I will snatch him from death, if, as they say,

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he can be saved by care. But if, in spite of you, in spite of me, the Count is dead. Well, then, if you were loved, or worshiped, by a man whose heart and character were worthy of yours——"

"I have perhaps madly wished to be loved, but I have never met——"

"Supposing you were mistaken."

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, suspecting him less of loving her than of a covetous dream; she poured contempt on him by a glance, measuring him from head to foot, and crushed him with two words, "Poor Malaga!" pronounced in those tones such as fine ladies alone can find in the gamut of their contempt.

She rose and left Thaddeus fainting, for she did not turn round, but walked with great dignity back to her boudoir, and thence up to her husband's room.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick man's bedside, and gave all his care to the Count, as though he had not received his own death-blow.

From that dreadful moment he became silent; he had a duel to fight with disease, and he carried it through in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At any hour his eyes were always beaming like two lamps. Without showing the slightest resentment towards Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed deaf. He had said to himself, "She shall owe Adam's life to me!" and these words he had, as it were, written in letters of fire in the sick man's room.

At the end of a fortnight Clémentine was obliged to give up some of the nursing, or risk falling ill from so much fatigue. Paz was inexhaustible. At last, about the end of August, Bianchon, the family doctor, answered for the Count's life:

"Ah, madame," said he to Clémentine, "you are under not the slightest obligation to me. But for his friend we could not have saved him!"

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On the day after the terrible scene in the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his nephew, for he was setting out for Russia with a secret mission; and Paz, overwhelmed by the previous evening, had spoken a few words to the diplomate.

On the very day when Count Adam and his wife went out for the first time for a drive, at the moment when the carriage was turning from the steps, an orderly came into the courtyard and asked for Count Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round to take a letter bearing the stamp of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and put it into the side-pocket of his coat, with a decision which precluded any questions on the part of Clémentine or Adam. It cannot be denied that persons of good breeding are masters of the language that uses no speech. Nevertheless, as they reached the Porte Maillot, Adam, assuming the privilege of a convalescent whose whims must be indulged, said to Thaddeus:

"There can be no indiscretions between two brothers who love each other as you and I do; you know what is in that letter; tell me, I am in a fever of curiosity."

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus as an angry woman can, and said to her husband, "He has been so sulky with me these two months, that I shall take good care not to press him."

"Oh dear me!" replied Thaddeus, "as I cannot hinder the newspapers from publishing it, I may very well reveal the secret. The Emperor Nicholas does me the favor of appointing me Captain on service in a regiment starting with the Khiva Expedition."

"And you are going?" cried Adam.

"I shall go, my dear fellow. I came as Captain, and as Captain I return. Malaga might lead me to make a fool of myself. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I did not set out in September for St. Petersburg, I should have to travel overland, and I am not rich. I must leave Malaga her little independence. How can I fail to provide for the future of the only woman who has under-

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stood me? Malaga thinks me a great man! Malaga thinks me handsome! Malaga may perhaps be faithless, but she would go through——".

"Through a hoop for you, and fall on her feet on horseback!" said Clémentine, sharply.

"Oh, you do not know Malaga," said the Captain, with deep bitterness, and an ironical look which made Clémentine uneasy and silent.

"Farewell to the young trees of this lovely Bois de Boulogne, where Parisian ladies drive, and the exiles wander who have found a home here. I know that my eyes will never again see the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, or of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar at the Ronds-points.

"On the Asiatic frontier, obedient to the schemes of the great Emperor I have chosen to be my master, promoted perhaps to command an army, for sheer courage, for constantly risking my life, I may indeed regret the Champs-Elysées where you, once, made me take a place in the carriage, by your side.—Finally, I shall never cease to regret the severity of Malaga—of the Malaga I am at this moment thinking of."

This was said in a tone that made Clémentine shiver.

"Then you love Malaga very truly?" she said.

"I have sacrificed for her the honor we never sacrifice——"

"Which?"

"That which we would fain preserve at any cost in the eyes of the idol we worship."

After this speech Thaddeus kept impenetrable silence; he broke it only when, as they drove down the Champs-Elysées, he pointed to a wooden structure and said, "There is the circus!"

Before their last dinner he went to the Russian Embassy for a few minutes, and from thence to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and he started for le Havre next morning before the Countess and Adam were up.

"I have lost a friend," said Adam, with tears in his eyes,

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as he learned that Count Paz was gone, "a friend in the truest sense of the word, and I cannot think what has made him flee from my house as if it were the plague. We are not the sort of friends to quarrel over a woman," he went on, looking full at Clémentine, "and yet all he said yesterday about Malaga—But he never laid the tip of his finger on the girl."

"How do you know?" asked Clémentine.

"Well, I was naturally curious to see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl cannot account for Thaddeus' extraordinary reserve——"

"That is enough," said the Countess, going off to her own room, and saying to herself, "I have surely been the victim of some sublime hoax."

She had scarcely made the reflection, when Constantine placed in her hands the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled in the night:—

"COUNTESS,—To go to be killed in the Caucasus, and to bear the burden of your scorn, is too much; a man should die unmutilated. I loved you from the first time I saw you, as a man loves the woman he will love for ever, even when she is faithless—I, under obligations to Adam, whom you chose and married—I, so poor, the volunteer steward, devoted to your household. In this dreadful catastrophe I found a delightful existence. To be an indispensable wheel in the machine, to know myself useful to your luxury and comfort, was a source of joy to me; and if that joy had been keen when Adam alone was my care, think what it must have been when the woman I worshiped was at once the cause and the effect! I have known all the joys of motherhood in my love; and I accepted life on those terms. Like the beggars on the highroads, I built myself a hut of stones on the skirts of your beautiful home, but without holding out my hand for alms. I, poor and unhappy, but blinded by Adam's happiness, I was the donor. Yes, you were hedged in by a love as pure as that of a guardian angel; it watched while you slept; it caressed you

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with a look as you passed by; it was glad merely to exist; in short, you were the sunshine of home to the hapless exile who is now writing to you, with tears in his eyes, as he recalls the happiness of those early days.

"At the age of eighteen, with no one to love me, I had chosen as an ideal mistress a charming woman at Warsaw, to whom I referred all my thoughts and my wishes, the queen of my days and nights. This woman knew nothing of it, but why inform her? For my part, what I loved was love.

"You may fancy, from this adventure of my boyhood, how happy I was, living within the sphere of your influence, grooming your horse, picking out new gold pieces for your purse, superintending the splendor of your table and your entertainments, seeing you eclipse fortunes greater than your own by my good management. With what zeal did I not rush round Paris when Adam said to me, 'Thaddeus, *She* wants this or that!' It was one of those joys for which there are no words. You have now and again wished for some trifle within a certain time which has compelled me to feats of expedition, driving for six or seven hours in a cab; and what happiness it has been to walk in your service. When I have watched you smiling in the midst of your flowers without being seen by you, I have forgotten that no one loved me—in short, at such moments I was but eighteen again.

"Sometimes, when my happiness turned my brain, I would go at night and kiss the spot where your feet had left, for me, a luminous trace, just as of old I had stolen, with a thief's miraculous skill, to kiss a key which Countess Ladislas had touched on opening a door. The air you breathed was embalmed; to me it was fresh life to breathe it; and I felt, as they say is the case in the tropics, overwhelmed by an atmosphere surcharged with creative elements. I must tell you all these things to account for the strange fatuity of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died sooner than divulge my secret.

"You may remember those few days when you were curious, when you wanted to see the worker of the wonders

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which had at last struck you with surprise. I believed—forgive me, madame—I believed that you would love me. Your kindliness, your looks—interpreted by a lover—seemed fraught with so much danger to me that I took up Malaga, knowing that there are *liaisons* which no woman can forgive; I took the girl up at the moment when I saw that my love was inevitably infectious. Overwhelm me now with the scorn which you poured upon me so freely when I did not deserve it; but I think I may be quite sure that if, on the evening when your aunt took the Count out, I had said what I have here written, having once said it I should have been like the tame tiger who has at last set his teeth in living flesh, and who scents warm blood. . . .

Midnight.

"I could write no more, the memory of that evening was too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium! I saw expectancy in your eyes; victory and its crimson banners may have burned in mine and fascinated yours. My crime was to think such things—and perhaps wrongly. You alone can be judge of that fearful scene when I succeeded in crushing love, desire, the most stupendous forces of manhood under the icy hand of gratitude which must be eternal. Your terrible scorn punished me. You have showed me that neither disgust nor contempt can ever be got over. I love you like a madman. I must have gone away if Adam had died. There is all the more reason since Adam is saved. I did not snatch my friend from the grave to betray him. And, indeed, my departure is the due punishment for the thought that came to me that I would let him die when the physicians said his life depended on his attendants.

"Farewell, madame; in leaving Paris I lose everything, but you lose nothing in parting with yours most faithfully,

"THADDEUS PAZ."

"If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?" thought Clémentine, sitting dejected, with her eyes fixed on a flower in the carpet.

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This is the note which Constantine delivered privately to his master:—

"My dear Mitgislas,—Malaga has told me all. For the sake of your happiness, never let a word escape you in Clémentine's presence as to your visits to the circus-rider; let her still believe that Malaga cost me a hundred thousand francs. With the Countess' character she will not forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga.—I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have a fit of spleen, and at the pace I mean to go, in three months I shall be Prince Paz, or dead. Farewell; though I have drawn sixty thousand francs out of Nucingen's, we are quits.

"Thaddeus."

"Idiot that I am! I very nearly betrayed myself just now by speaking of the circus-rider!" said Adam to himself.

Thaddeus has been gone three years, and the papers do not as yet mention any Prince Paz. Countess Laginski takes a keen interest in the Emperor Nicholas' expeditions; she is a Russian at heart, and reads with avidity all the news from that country. Once or twice a year she says to the Ambassador, with an affectation of indifference, "Do you know what has become of our poor friend Paz?"

Alas! most Parisian women, keen-eyed and subtle as they are supposed to be, pass by—and always will pass by—such an one as Paz without observing him. Yes, more than one Paz remains misunderstood; but, fearful thought! some are misunderstood even when they are loved. The simplest woman in the world requires some little coxcombry in the greatest man; and the most heroic love counts for nothing if it is uncut; it needs the arts of the polisher and the jeweler.

In the month of January 1842 Countess Laginski, beautified by gentle melancholy, inspired a mad passion in the

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Comte de la Palférine, one of the most audacious bucks of Paris at this day. La Palférine understood the difficulty of conquering a woman guarded by a chimera; to triumph over this bewitching woman, he trusted to a surprise, and to the assistance of a woman who, being a little jealous of Clémentine, would lend herself to plot the chances of the adventure.

Clémentine, incapable with all her wit of suspecting such treachery, was so imprudent as to go with this false friend to the masked ball at the opera. At about three in the morning, carried away by the excitement of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had exhausted himself in attentions, consented to sup with him, and was getting into the lady's carriage. At this critical moment she was seized by a strong arm, and in spite of her cries placed in her own carriage, which was standing with the door open, though she did not know that it was waiting.

"He has not left Paris!" she exclaimed, recognizing Thaddeus, who ran off when he saw the carriage drive away with the Countess.

Had ever another woman such a romance in her life?

Clémentine is always hoping to see Paz again.

PARIS, *January* 1842.

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URSULE MIROUËT

AND OTHER STORIES

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INTRODUCTION

"URSULE MIROUËT," dedicated by Balzac to his niece Sophie Surville, and avowedly written "in the fear of the young person," or, as the author more elegantly puts it, in "uncompromising respect of the noble principles of a pious education," exposes itself by the very fact to two different sorts of prejudice. It is sure to be cried up by one set of judges as "wholesome," and to be cried down by another as "goody."

The latter charge is certainly unfair, for Balzac has by no means written the book in rose-pink and sky-blue only, nor has he been afraid to show things more or less as they are. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to admit that evidences of restraint and convention do exist. Ursule—even more than Eugénie, who becomes a person on at least two occasions, her struggle with her father, and her *revanche* over her cousin—is a thing of shreds and patches, an ideal being in whom that mysterious "candor," to which the French attach such excessive value in a girl, and which they make such haste to do away with altogether in a woman, seems to shut out all positive individuality. She is very nice; but she is not very human.

Nor can the machinery of dreams, hypnotism, Swedenborgianism, and what not, which Balzac, following out one of his well-known manias, chose to work into the book, be said to add very largely to its verisimilitude. It contrasts too sharply with the extremely prosaic, if not always very probable, details of Minoret-Levrault's theft of the will, and of

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the jealousy of the heirs, which it is interesting to contrast with Dickens' management of the same subject in *Great Expectations.* How far this combination is artistically possible or advisable is a question of abstract criticism into which we need not enter. I think it does not require much argument to prove that Balzac has not, as a matter of fact, quite shown the possibility or the desirableness here. I do not know in the work of a man of genius a more striking instance of the wisdom of the principle, *Nec Deus intersit,* to which, in our day, Horace would certainly have given the form, "Keep the supernatural in fiction out, unless you can't manage with the natural."

However, even this may be a question of opinion; and it is at least worth while to point out that in this book Balzac has anticipated, very curiously and interestingly, a large class of English fiction of a later day, which, in its turn, has been imitated in France. The whole scheme, indeed, of *Ursule Mirouët,* by no means owing only to its respect of the young person, though doubtless partly owing to this, is far more that of an English novel than of a French. The absence of the usual "triangle," and of all courtship of married women, together with the difficulty (which a Frenchman even now, to some extent, experiences, and experienced much more in Balzac's days), of making very much of "honest" love-scenes between man and maid, put Balzac's always fertile invention upon hunting out and setting to work other sources of interest, which, with the possible exception of the dream-and-vision part of the book, he has, as a rule, engineered very happily. Even the love affair between Ursule and Savinien de Portenduère is not to be contemptuously spoken of; and the figure of Savinien is very pleasantly touched. It is to be noted that even Balzac's favorite heroes

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of unprincipled convention—Marsay, Rastignac, and the rest —exhibit themselves less theatrically in their dealings with the youthful Vicomte than in almost any other of their numerous appearances. Marsay's theory of debt may be amusingly and advantageously contrasted with the opposite, but in a certain sense complementary, remarks of George Warrington on the same subject in *Pendennis*. Madame de Portenduère, too, is good, and not overdone.

On the cabals against Ursule opinions may perhaps differ. It is not easy to say that anything is improbable in the case of a stupid malefactor like Minoret-Levrault; and *odisse quem læseris* is an eternal verity. Still, one would rather have been inclined to suppose that the postmaster, having been so completely successful in his theft, would instinctively feel that it was wiser to let Ursule alone. The malignity of Goupil, too, seems a little overdone, and the whole character of this agreeable lawyer's clerk again presents *mutatis mutandis* something of the eccentric extravagance of Dickens, between whom and Balzac the parallel is perpetually fascinating, because of its constant intermixture of likenesses and contrasts.

But the comic personages generally must be said to be very good. They are not overdone, as the great English novelist just referred to would probably have overdone them; indeed, Balzac has been distinctly sober and sparing in the delineation of their "humors." Dickens certainly, and most English novelists probably, would have been tempted to bring much more to the front poor Madame Crémière's linguistic peculiarities. These will remind everybody of Mrs. Malaprop, though they are more like a historical but much less famous example, the "Lingo Grande,' which Southey in divers letters to Grosvenor Bedford puts into the mouth of

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his sister-in-law Mrs. Coleridge. The doctor, the magistrate, the *curé*, the *procureur du roi*, and all the powers that be play their parts well, and more than a mere good word is deserved by Désiré Minoret, to whom Balzac has been rather cruel.

The doctor himself is a more problematical character. His conversion smacks a little of the stage; and it certainly might seem that such an experienced personage, well aware of the ferocity of the fortune-hunters who surrounded him, would have taken rather more pains to put the future of Ursule out of danger by lodging a duplicate will somewhere, or availing himself of some of the devices in which French law, even under the Code Napoléon, is nearly as fertile as English. But the testamentary unreason of mankind is a sufficiently well-authenticated fact to justify Balzac.

Altogether, the book, if not exactly in the first class for power, takes high rank for variety of interest and for the peculiar character of its scheme. It has no duplicate in its author's work, and we could not spare it. *Ursule Mirouët* first appeared in a newspaper, *Le Messager*, in the issues of August 25 to September 23 inclusive; and when next year it was published in two volumes by Souverain, it had, as it had in the periodical, twenty-one chapters with headings. Yet another year, and it lost these chapters, and all divisions except the two part-headings of "Les Héritiers Alarmés" and "La Succession Minoret," and took place in the third edition of the *Scènes de la Vie de Province* and the first of the *Comédie* generally.

G. S.

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The story of *Massimilla Doni,* included here for convenience, contrasts sharply with *Ursule Mirouët* both in sentiment and method of handling. In *Massimilla* the reader is plunged suddenly into Italian thought, and life, and license—as Balzac saw them. One must remember, however, that Balzac had his own pet theories relative to this land; for him it was always veiled in a species of enchantment and ideality. For him, too, the love of music and painting, though untutored, reached a devotion almost awe. These shrines of art receive their incense often in the varied scenes of the *Comédie,* but nowhere does music sway more absolutely than in this sketch of *Massimilla Doni* and the kindred sketch of *Gambara.* Despite this fact, or perhaps on account of it, the stories are not distinctly successful. Musically speaking, the technique is not good; the art degenerates into "caprice;" while the rest "approaches a 'cochonerie.'" The lugging in of the muse to form the basis of a tragic element may be only a hidden sarcasm, but Balzac introduces it with every evidence of sincerity, and even freights it with philosophy. The effect is not attractive either as *feu divin* or *feu d'enfer.* For the rest, *Massimilla Doni* is relieved by some clever touches.

The other two stories are from the *Marana* group, which includes some of the best of Balzac's short stories. *Un Drame au bord de la Mer* may be spoken of as an anecdote rather than a story. The climax is more important than the thread of the narrative. It easily kept place with its early companions in this group. *L'Auberge Rouge* may not be admired so much. It has interest; and it may be observed that as indicating the origin of Taillefer's wealth, it connects itself with the general scheme of the *Comédie* as few of the others do. But it is an attempt, like one or two others of

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Balzac's, at a style very popular in 1830, a sort of combination of humor and terror, of Sterne and Monk Lewis, which is a little doubtful in itself, which has very rarely been done well, and for which Balzac was not completely equipped.

Massimilla Doni first appeared (barring an earlier fragment) in 1839 as a book with *Une Fille d'Eve.* In 1846 it took its place in the *Comédie.* It was included, in 1849, in a volume entitled *Le Livre des douleurs,* with *Gambara, Séraphita,* and *Les Proscrits. Un Drame au bord de la Mer* appeared nowhere except in book form with its companions of the *Marana* group, which was included in the fourth edition of the *Etudes philosophiques,* 1835-1837. But in 1843 it left them, though not permanently, and accompanied *La Muse du Département, Albert Savarus,* and *Facino Cane,* with the title of *La Justice Paternelle. L'Auberge Rouge* appeared in the *Revue de Paris,* August 1831, before its incorporation into the *Marana* series.

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URSULE MIROUËT

To Mademoiselle Sophie Surville.

It is a real pleasure, my dear niece, to dedicate to you a book of which the subject and the details have gained the approbation —so difficult to secure—of a young girl to whom the world is as yet unknown, and who will make no compromise with the high principles derived from a pious education. You young girls are a public to be dreaded; you ought never to be suffered to read any book less pure than your own pure souls, and you are forbidden certain books, just as you are not allowed to see society as it really is. Is it not enough, then, to make a writer proud, to know that he has satisfied you? Heaven grant that affection may not have misled you! Who can say? The future only, which you, I hope, will see, though he may not, who is your uncle

DE BALZAC.

PART I

THE HEIRS IN ALARM

As you enter Nemours coming from Paris, you cross the canal of the Loing, whose banks form a rural rampart to the pretty little town, and afford many picturesque walks. Since 1830, unfortunately, many houses have been built beyond the bridge. If this suburb increases, the aspect of the town will lose much of its attractive originality.

But in 1829 the country on each side of the road lay open, and the postmaster, a tall, burly man of about sixty, as he sat on the highest point of the bridge one fine morning, could

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command a view of what he would have called a ribbon-road.

The month of September was lavishing its wealth. The atmosphere quivered with heat above the grass and stones, not a cloud flecked the ethereal blue, of which the vivid transparency was uniform to the very horizon, showing the extreme rarity of the air. Indeed, Minoret-Levrault, the postmaster in question, was obliged to shade his eyes with his hand not to be quite dazzled. Out of patience with waiting, he looked now at the lovely meadows spreading away to the right, where his after-crop was growing apace, and now at the densely wooded hills to the left, stretching from Nemours to Bouron. And in the valley of the Loing, where the noises on the road came back echoed from the hill, he could hear the gallop of his own horses, and the cracking of his postilions' whips.

Could any one but a postmaster get out of patience with gazing at a field full of cattle, such as Paul Potter painted, under a sky worthy of Raphael, by a canal overhung with trees, like a picture by Hobbema? Any one who knows Nemours, knows that nature there is as beautiful as art, whose mission it is to spiritualize nature; the landscape there has ideas, and suggests thoughts.

Still, on seeing Minoret-Levrault, an artist would have left his place to sketch this country townsman; he was so original by sheer force of being common. Combine all the characteristics of the brute and you get Caliban, who certainly is a great creation. Where matter predominates, sentiment ends. The postmaster, a living proof of this axiom, had one of those countenances in which the student finds it hard to discern the soul through the violent purple hues of the coarsely developed flesh. His little bored blue cap with a peak, fitted closely to a head so huge as to prove that Gall's science of phrenology has not yet dealt with the exceptions to his rules. The shining gray hair, which formed a fringe to the cap, showed that white hairs may be the result of other causes than overworked brains or severe grief.

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His large ears were almost bursting round the edges from the fulness of too abundant blood, which seemed ready to spurt out after the smallest exertion. His complexion showed purple blotches under a brown pigment, the result of constant exposure to the sun. His gray eyes, restless and deep set, hidden under two black bushes of eyebrow, were like the eyes of the Kalmucks seen in Paris in 1815; if they glistened now and then, it could only be under the influence of a covetous idea. His nose, squat at the base, took a sudden turn up like the foot of a kettle. Thick lips harmonized with an almost disgusting double chin, rough with the stubble of a beard shaved scarcely twice a week, which rubbed a dirty necktie into a state of worn string; a very short neck, in rolls of fat, and puffy cheeks, completed this image of stupid strength, such as sculptors give to their caryatides. Minoret-Levrault was like one of those statues, with the difference that they support something, while he had enough to do to support himself.

You will meet with many an Atlas like him. The man's torso was a huge block, a bull standing on his hind legs. Powerful arms terminated in thick, hard hands, broad and strong, apt at wielding the whip, the reins, and the pitchfork, hands which were no joke in the eyes of his postilions. The enormous stomach of this giant rested on legs as thick as the body of a full-grown man, and feet like an elephant's. Rage was no doubt rare in this man, but when it broke out it would be terrible, apoplectic. Though he was violent and incapable of reflection, the man had done nothing to justify the sinister threats of his appearance. When any one trembled before the giant, his post-boys would say, "Oh, he is not a bad fellow!"

The "Master" of Nemours, to make use of an abbreviation common in many countries, wore a shooting jacket of bottle-green velveteen, trousers of striped green duck, and a vast yellow mohair waistcoat. In the waistcoat pocket an enormous snuff-box was evident, outlined by a black ring. That a snub nose argues a big snuff-box is a rule almost without exception.

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Minoret-Levrault, as a son of the Revolution, and a spectator of the Empire, had never concerned himself with politics; as to his religious opinions, he had never set foot in a church but to be married; as to his principles in domestic life, they were contained in the Civil Code. He thought everything permissible that was not forbidden or indictable by law. He had never read anything but the local newspaper and some manuals relating to his business. He was regarded as a skilful agriculturist, but his knowledge was purely empirical.

In Minoret-Levrault, then, the mind did not give the lie to the body. He spoke rarely, and before delivering himself he always took a pinch of snuff to gain time to find, not ideas, but words. If he had been talkative, he would have seemed a failure.

When you think that this sort of elephant, without a trunk and without intelligence, was called Minoret-Levrault, must you not recognize, with Sterne, the occult power of names, which sometimes mask and sometimes label the character of their owners? In spite of these conspicuous disadvantages, in thirty-six years, the Revolution helping, he had made a fortune of thirty thousand francs a year, in meadow land, arable land, and woods.

Though Minoret, who had shares in the Nemours Messageries Company, and an interest in the Gatinais Company at Paris, was still hard at work, it was not so much from habit as for the sake of his only son, for whom he wished to prepare handsome prospects. This son, who, in the peasants' phraseology, had become a gentleman, had just ended his studies for the law, and on the reopening of the courts was to be sworn as a qualified attorney. Monsieur and Madame Minoret-Levrault—for behind the colossus a woman is evident, a wife, without whom such a fortune would have been impossible—had left their son free to choose his career, as a notary at Paris, as public prosecutor in some country town, as receiver-general, stockbroker, or postmaster. What fancy might he not allow himself to what profession might

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he not aspire, as the son of a man of whom it was said from Montargis to Essonne, "Father Minoret does not know how much he has"?

This idea had received fresh confirmation when, four years since, after selling his inn, Minoret built himself a splendid house and stables, and removed the posting business from the High Street to the riverside. The new buildings had cost two hundred thousand francs, which gossip doubled for thirty miles round. The posting-stage at Nemours required a great number of horses; it worked as far as Fontainebleau on the Paris side, and beyond the roads to Montargis and Montereau; the relays were long, and the sandy soil about Montargis justified the imaginary third horse, which is always paid for and never seen. A man of Minoret's build, and of Minoret's wealth, at the head of such a concern, might well be called without abuse of words the Master of Nemours. Though he never gave a thought to God or the Devil, and was a practical materialist—as he was a practical agriculturist, a practical egoist, a practical miser—Minoret had hitherto enjoyed unmixed happiness, if a merely material existence may be regarded as happy. On seeing the pad of flesh which covered the man's top vertebræ and pressed on his occiput, and especially on hearing his shrill, thin voice, which contrasted ludicrously with his bull-neck, a physiologist would have understood at once why this great, coarse, burly countryman adored his only son, and perhaps why he had so long awaited his birth—as the name given to the child, Désiré, sufficiently indicated. In short, if love, as betraying a rich physical nature, is the promise of great things in a man, philosophers will understand the causes of Minoret's failure.

His wife, whom the son happily resembled, vied with his father in spoiling the boy. No child's nature could hold out against such idolatry. And, indeed, Désiré, who knew the extent of his power, was clever enough to draw on his mother's savings-box and dip his hand in his father's purse, making each of his fond parents believe that he had not ap-

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plied to the other. Désiré, who played at Nemours a far more grateful part than that of a prince in his father's capital, had indulged all his fancies at Paris just as he did in his little native town, and had spent more than twelve thousand francs a year. But then, for this money, he had acquired ideas which would never have come into his head at Nemours; he had cast his provincial skin, he had learned the power of money, and had seen that the legal profession was a means of rising in the world. During the last year he had spent ten thousand francs more by forming intimacies with artists, journalists, and their mistresses.

A somewhat alarming confidential letter might have accounted, in case of need, for the postmaster's anxious lookout, a letter in which his son asked his sanction for a marriage; but Madame Minoret-Levrault, fully occupied in preparing a sumptuous meal in honor of the success and the return of the fully-fledged lawyer, had sent her husband out on the road, desiring him to ride forward if he saw no signs of the diligence. The diligence by which this only son was to arrive usually reached Nemours at about five in the morning, and it was now striking nine! What could cause such a delay? Had there been an upset? Was Désiré alive? Had he even broken a leg?

Three volleys of cracking whips rattle out, rending the air like the report of firearms; the red waistcoats of the post-boys are just in sight, ten horses neigh at once! The master takes off his cap and waves it; and he is seen. The best mounted of the postilions, who is returning with two dappled gray post-horses, touches up the beast he is riding, outstripping five sturdy diligence horses, and the Minorets of the stable, three carriage horses, and comes up to the master.

"Have you seen the 'Ducler'?"

On the highroads all the coaches have names—fantastical enough: they are spoken of as the "Caillard," the "Ducler" (the diligence between Nemours and Paris), the "Grand-Bureau." Every new company's coach is the "Rival." At

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the time when the Lecomtes ran coaches, their vehicles were known as the "Comtesses."

"The 'Caillard' did not overtake the 'Comtesse,' but the 'Grand-Bureau' caught her skirts, anyhow!—The 'Caillard' and the 'Grand-Bureau' have done for the 'Françaises'"—the coaches of the Messageries Françaises or royal mails. If you see a post-boy going fit to split, and refusing a glass of wine, question the guard; he will cock his nose and stare into space, and reply, "The Rival is ahead!" "And we cannot even see her!" adds the postilion. "The wretch! he has not given his passengers time to eat!" "As if he had any!" retorts the guard. "Whip up Polignac!" All the worst horses are called Polignac. These are the standing jokes and subjects of conversation between the postilions and the guards at the top of the coaches. In France every profession has its own slang.

"Did you see inside the 'Ducler'?"

"Monsieur Désiré?" says the postilion, interrupting his master. "Why, you must have heard us! Our whips gave due notice of her. We made sure you would be on the road."

"Why is the diligence four hours late?"

"The tire of one of the wheels came off between Essonne and Ponthierry. But there was no accident; Cabirolle fortunately discovered it as we were going up the hill."

At this instant a woman in her Sunday best—for the bells of all the churches of Nemours were summoning the inhabitants to mid-day Mass—a woman of about six-and-thirty, addressed the postmaster.

"Well, cousin," said she, "you would not believe me! Our uncle is in the High Street with Ursule, and they are going to Mass."

In spite of the license of modern romance in the matter of local coloring, it is impossible to carry realism so far as to repeat the horrible abuse, mingled with oaths, which this news, so undramatic as it would seem, brought from the wide mouth of Minoret-Levrault; his thin voice became a hiss, and his face had the appearance which the country folk ingeniously refer to as "sunstroke."

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"Are you certain?" he asked after his first explosion of rage.

The postilions as they went by touched three hats to the master, who seemed neither to see nor hear them. Instead of waiting for his son, Minoret-Levrault returned up the High Street with his cousin.

"Did I not always tell you so?" she went on. "When Doctor Minoret has fallen into his dotage, that sanctimonious little slut will make a bigot of him; and as those who rule the mind rule the purse, she will get all our money."

"But, Madame Massin," said the postmaster, quite confounded.

"Oh yes!" cried Madame Massin, interrupting her cousin, "you will say as Massin does: 'Is a girl of fifteen likely to invent and execute such a plot? To make a man of eighty-three, who never set foot in a church excepting to be married, give up all his opinions?—A man who has such a horror of priests that he did not even go to the parish church with the child the day of her first communion.' But, I say, if Doctor Minoret has such a horror of priests, why, for the last fifteen years, has he spent almost every evening of the week with the Abbé Chaperon? The old hypocrite never fails to give Ursule twenty francs to pay for a taper when she presents the wafer for the Mass. Why, do you not remember the gift Ursule made to the Church as a thank-offering to the curé for having prepared her for her first communion? She spent all her money on it, and her godfather gave it back to her doubled. You men pay no heed to anything! When I heard all these details: 'Put away your baskets,' said I; 'the grapes are not for you!' A rich uncle does not behave in that way to a little hussy he has picked out of the gutter unless he means something by it."

"Pooh! cousin," replied the postmaster, "the good man is escorting her as far as the church by mere chance. It is a fine day, and he is going to take a walk."

"I tell you, cousin, our uncle has a prayer-book in his hand; and he looks that smug! However, you will see!"

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"They have been playing a very sly game," observed the burly postmaster, "for old Bougival told me that there never was any religious discussion between the doctor and the Abbé Chaperon. Besides, the vicar of Nemours is the best man on earth; he would give his last shirt to a beggar; he is incapable of a mean action, and to filch an inheritance is a——"

"It is robbery!" said Madame Massin.

"It is worse!" cried Minoret-Levrault, exasperated by his voluble cousin's remark.

"I know," she went on, "that the Abbé Chaperon, though he is a priest, is an honest man. But he is capable of anything for the poor. He must have mined, mined, mined under Uncle Minoret, and the doctor has fallen into bigotry. We were easy in our minds, and now he is perverted. A man who never believed in anything, and who had principles! Oh, we are all done for! My husband is dreadfully upset."

Madame Massin, whose speeches were so many arrows that stung her stout cousin, made him walk as briskly as herself in spite of his size, to the great amazement of the people who were going to Mass. She wanted to catch up this Uncle Minoret and show him to the postmaster.

On the Gatinais side of Nemours the town is commanded by a hill, along the base of which the river Loing flows, and the road runs to Montargis. The church, on which time has cast a rich mantle of gray, for it was certainly rebuilt in the fourteenth century by the Guises, in whose honor Nemours gave its name to a duchy and peerage, stands at the end of the town beyond a large archway, as in a frame. For buildings, as for men, position is everything. Shaded by trees and shown to advantage by a neat little square, this lonely church has a quite imposing effect. As they came out on to the square, the postmaster could see his uncle giving his arm to the young girl they had called Ursule, each carrying a prayer-book, and just entering the church. The old man took off his hat in the porch, and his perfectly white head, like a summit covered with snow, shone in the soft gloom of the great doorway.

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"Well, Minoret, what do you say to your uncle's conversion?" cried the tax-receiver of Nemours, whose name was Crémière.

"What do you expect me to say?" replied the postmaster, offering him a pinch of snuff.

"Well answered, Father Levrault. You cannot say what you think, if a certain learned writer was correct in saying that a man must necessarily think his words before he can speak his thought," mischievously exclaimed a young man who had just come up, and who played in Nemours the part of Mephistopheles in "Faust."

This rascally fellow, named Goupil, was head clerk to Monsieur Crémière-Dionis, the notary of the town. Notwithstanding the antecedents of an almost crapulous career, Dionis had taken Goupil into his office when absolute destitution hindered him from remaining any longer at Paris, where the clerk had spent all the money left him by his father, a well-to-do farmer, who meant him to become a notary.. Only to see Goupil was enough to tell you that he had made haste to enjoy life; for, to procure himself pleasure, he must have paid dearly for it. Though very short, the clerk, at seven-and-twenty, had a form as burly as that of any man of forty. Short, thin legs, a broad face with a mottled, muddy skin, like the sky before a storm, and a bald forehead, gave emphasis to this strange figure. His face looked as if it belonged to a hunchback, whose hump was an internal deformity. A peculiarity of this sour, pale face confirmed the notion of this invisible malformation. His nose, hooked and twisted, as is often the case with hunchbacks, had a crossway slope from right to left, instead of dividing the face down the middle. His mouth, pinched at the corners —the sardonic mouth—was always eager for irony. His thin, reddish hair fell in dank locks, showing the head through here and there. His great hands and clumsy wrists, at the end of overlong arms, were like talons, and very seldom clean. Goupil wore shoes only fit to be thrown into the dust-heap. and rusty-black, spun-silk stockings; his black coat and trou-

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sers, rubbed perfectly threadbare, and almost greasy with dirt; his abject waistcoats, with buttons from which the mould had slipped out; the old bandana he wore as a cravat—every part of his dress proclaimed the cynical misery to which his passions condemned him.

This aggregate of sinister details was completed by a pair of goat's eyes, the iris set in yellow rings, at once lascivious and cowardly. No man in Nemours was more feared or more respectfully treated than Goupil. Strong in pretensions which his ugliness allowed, he had the detestable wit that is peculiar to persons who take every liberty, and he made use of it to be revenged for the mortifications of his permanent jealousy. He rhymed satirical couplets such as are sung at the Carnival, he got up farcical demonstrations, and himself wrote almost the whole of the local newspaper gossip. Dionis, a keen, false nature, and therefore a timid one, kept Goupil as much out of fear as on account of his intelligence and his thorough knowledge of family interests in the neighborhood. But the master so little trusted the clerk that he managed his accounts himself, did not allow him to lodge at his house, and never employed him on any confidential or delicate business. The clerk flattered his master, never showing the resentment he felt at this conduct; and he watched Madame Dionis with an eye to revenge. He had a quick intelligence, and worked well and easily.

"Oh you! You are laughing already at our misfortunes," said the postmaster to the clerk, who was rubbing his hands.

As Goupil basely flattered every passion of Désiré's, who for the last five years had made him his companion, the postmaster treated him cavalierly enough, never suspecting what a horrible store of evil feeling was accumulating at the bottom of Goupil's heart at each fresh thrust. The clerk having come to the conclusion that he, more than any one, needed money, and knowing himself to be superior to all the good townsfolk of Nemours, aimed at making a fortune, and counted on Désiré's friendship to procure for him one of the three good openings in the place—the registrarship

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of the law courts, the business of one of the ushers, or that of Dionis. So he patiently endured the postmaster's hectoring, and Madame Minoret-Levrault's disdain, and played an ignominious part to oblige Désiré, who, for these two years past, had left him to console the Ariadnes he abandoned at the end of the vacation. Thus, Goupil ate the crumbs of the suppers he had prepared.

"If I had been the old fool's nephew, he should not have made God my co-heir," retorted the clerk, with a hideous grin that showed his wide-set and threatening black teeth.

At this moment Massin-Levrault, junior, the justice's registrar, came up with his wife, and with him was Madame Crémière the tax-receiver's wife. This man, one of the crudest natives of the little town, had a face like a Tartar, small, round eyes like sloes under a sloping forehead, crinkled hair, an oily skin, large flat ears, a mouth almost without lips, and a thin beard. His manners had the merciless smoothness of the usurer whose dealings are based on fixed principles. He spoke like a man who has lost his voice. To complete the picture, he made his wife and his eldest daughter write out the copies of verdicts.

Madame Crémière was a very fat woman, doubtfully fair, with a thickly freckled complexion; she wore her gowns too tight, was great friends with Madame Dionis, and passed as well informed because she read novels. This lady of finance of the lowest type, full of pretensions to elegance and culture, was awaiting her uncle's fortune to assume "a certain style," to decorate her drawing-room, and "receive" her fellow-townsfolk; for her husband refused to allow her clockwork lamps, lithographs, and the trifles she saw in the notary's wife's drawing-room. She was excessively afraid of Goupil, who was always on the watch to repeat her *capsulingies*—this was her way of saying *lapsus linguæ*. One day Madame Dionis said to her that she did not know what water to use for her teeth.

"Try gum water," said she.*

* Madame Crémière's "capsulingies" are impossible to translate; an equivalent is all that can be attempted.

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By this time most of old Doctor Minoret's collateral relations had assembled in the Church Square, and the importance of the event which had agitated them was so universally understood, that the groups of peasants, men and women, armed with red umbrellas and clad in the bright hues which make them so picturesque on fête-days as they tramp the roads, all had their eyes turned on the doctor's presumptive heirs. In those little towns, which hold a middle rank between the larger villages and the great cities, people who do not attend Mass linger on the Square. They discuss business. At Nemours the hour of Mass is also that of a weekly money-market, to which come the residents in the scattered houses from a mile and a half round. This accounts for the mutual understanding of the peasants as against the masters, on the price of produce in relation to labor.

"And how would you have hindered it?" said the master to Goupil.

"I would have made myself as indispensable to him as the air he breathes. But you did not know how to manage him to begin with. An inheritance needs as much looking after as a pretty woman, and for lack of care both may slip through your fingers. If my master's wife were here, she would tell you how accurate the comparison is," he added.

"But Monsieur Bongrand has just told me we need not be uneasy," said the Justice's registrar.

"Oh! there are several ways of saying that," replied Goupil, with a laugh. "I should have liked to hear your cunning Justice say that! Why, if there were nothing more to be done; if I, like him—for he lives at your uncle's,—knew that the game was up, I should say with him, 'Don't be at all uneasy.'"

And as he spoke the words, Goupil smiled in such a comical way, and gave them so plain a meaning, that the inheritors at once suspected the registrar of having been taken in by the Justice's cunning. The receiver of taxes, a fat little man, as insignificant as a tax collector must be, and as witless as a clever wife could wish, demolished his co-heir Massin with: "Didn't I tell you so?"

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As double dealers always ascribe their own duplicity to others, Massin looked askance at the Justice of the peace, who was at this moment standing near the church with a former client, the Marquis du Rouvre.

"If only I were sure of it!" said he.

"You could nullify the protection he extends to the Marquis du Rouvre, who is within the power of the law, and liable to imprisonment; he is deluging him with advice at this moment," said Goupil, insinuating an idea of revenge to the registrar. "But draw it mild with your chief; he is very wide awake; he must have some influence over your uncle, and may yet be able to prevent his leaving everything to the Church."

"Pooh! we shall not die of it," said Minoret-Levrault, opening his huge snuff-box.

"You will not live by it either," replied Goupil, making the two women shiver; for they, more rapidly than their husbands, interpreted as privation the loss of the inheritance on which they had counted for comfort. "But we will drown this little grievance in floods of champagne, in honor of Désiré's return, won't we, *gros père?*" he added, tapping the colossus in the stomach, and thus inviting himself for fear of being forgotten.

Before going any further, the precise reader will perhaps be glad to have here a sort of preamble in the form of a pedigree, which indeed is very necessary to define the degrees of relationship in which the old man, so suddenly converted, stood to the three fathers of families or their wives. These intermarriages of kindred race in provincial life may be the subject of more than one instructive reflection.

At Nemours there are not more than three or four noble families, of no great rank or fame; among them, at the time of our story, shone that of the Portenduères. These exclusive families visit the nobility who possess lands and châteaux in the neighboring country—the d'Aiglemonts, for instance, owners of the fine estate of Saint-Lange, and the

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Marquis du Rouvre, on whose property, eaten up with mortgages, the townsfolk kept a greedy eye. The nobility who live in the towns have no wealth. Madame de Portenduère's whole estate consisted of a farm, yielding four thousand seven hundred francs a year, and her house in the town. In the opposite scale to this miniature Faubourg Saint-Germain are half a score of rich citizens, retired millers and tradespeople, in short, a miniature middle class, below whom struggle the small shopkeepers, the laboring class, and the peasants. This middle class affords here, as in the Swiss cantons and other small communities, the curious phenomenon of the dispersal of a few families native to the soil, perhaps ancient Gaulish clans, settling on a district, pervading it, and making all the inhabitants cousins. At the time of Louis XI., the period when the third estate at last took the by-names they were known by as permanent surnames, some of which presently mingled with those of the feudal class, the citizens of Nemours were all Minoret, Massin, Levrault, or Crémière. By Louis XIII.'s time these four families had given rise to Massin-Crémière, Levrault-Massin, Massin-Minoret, Minoret-Minoret, Crémière-Levrault, Levrault-Minoret-Massin, Massin-Levrault, Minoret-Massin, Massin-Massin, and Crémière-Massin; all further diversified by "Junior" and "eldest son;" or by Crémière-François, Levrault-Jacques, and Jean-Minoret, enough to madden a Father Anselme, if the populace ever needed a genealogist.

The changes in this domestic kaleidoscope with four separate elements were so complicated by births and marriages, that the pedigree of the citizens of Nemours would have puzzled even the compilers of the Almanac de Gotha, notwithstanding the atomic science with which they work out the zigzags of German alliances. For a long time the Minorets held the tanneries, the Crémières were the millers, the Massins went into business, the Levraults remained farmers.

Happily for the country, these four stocks struck out rather than round the trunk, or threw out suckers by the ex

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patriation of sons who sought a living elsewhere: there are Minorets, cutlers, at Melun, Levraults at Montargis, Massins at Orleans, and Crémières who have grown rich at Paris. Very various are the destinies of these bees that have swarmed outside the native hive. Rich Massins employ laboring Massins, just as there are German princes in the service of Austria or Prussia. In the same department may be seen a Minoret millionaire protected by a Minoret soldier with the same blood in their veins; but having only their names in common, these four shuttles had unceasingly woven a human web, of which each piece turned out a gown or a clout, the finest lawn or the coarsest lining. The same blood throbbed in their head, feet, or heart, in toiling hands, damaged lungs, or a brow big with genius. The heads of the clan faithfully clung to the little town where the ties of relationship could be relaxed or tightened, as the results of this community of names might dictate.

In every country, with a change of names, you will find the same fact; but bereft of the poetry with which feudality had invested it, and which Walter Scott has reproduced with so much talent.

Look a little higher, and study humanity in history. All the noble families of the eleventh century, now almost all extinct excepting the royal race of Capet, must have co-operated towards the birth of a Rohan, a Montmorency, a Bauffremont, a Mortemart of the present day; at last, all would co-exist in the blood of the humblest man of really gentle birth. In other words, every citizen is cousin to other citizens, every noble is cousin to other nobles. As we are told in the sublime page of Biblical genealogy, in a thousand years the three families of Shem, Ham, and Japhet could people the whole earth. A family can become a nation; and, unfortunately, a nation may become one single family. To prove this we have only to apply to a family pedigree—in which the ancestors multiply backwards in geometrical progression—the sum worked out by the sage who invented the game of chess. He claimed, as his reward from the Persian

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king, an ear of corn for the first square on the board, two for the second, and so on, doubling the number every time, and proved that the whole kingdom could not pay it. This network of the nobility entangled in the network of the middle class, this antagonism of blood—the one class protected by rigid traditions, the other by the active endurance of labor and the craft of trade instincts—brought about the Revolution of 1789. The two strains, almost united, are to be seen to-day face to face with collaterals bereft of their inheritance. What will they do? Our political future is big with the reply.

The family of the man who, in Louis XV.'s time, was the representative Minoret, was so large, that one of the five—the very Minoret whose coming to church was making such a sensation—went to seek his fortune in Paris, and appeared in his native town only at long intervals, whither he came, no doubt, to acquire his share of the inheritance at the death of his grandparents. After suffering a great deal, as all young men must who are gifted with a strong will and desire a place in the brilliant world of Paris, this son of the Minorets made a career more splendid perhaps than he had dreamed of at the beginning; for he devoted himself to medicine, one of the professions in which both talent and good luck are needed, and good luck even more than talent. Supported by Dupont (of Nemours), brought by a happy chance into contact with the Abbé Morellet (whom Voltaire nicknamed *Mords les*), and patronized by the encyclopedists, Doctor Minoret attached himself with fanatical devotion to the great physician Bordeu, Diderot's friend. D'Alembert, Helvétius, Baron d'Holbach, and Grimm, to whom he was a mere boy, ended, no doubt, like Bordeu, by taking an interest in Minoret, who in 1777 had a fine connection among the deists, encyclopedists, sensualists, materialists—call them as you will—the wealthy philosophers of that day. Though he was very little of a quack, he invented a famous remedy, Lelièvre's balsam, which was cried up in the *Mercure de France,* and which was permanently advertised on the last

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page of that paper, the encyclopedists' organ. The apothecary Lelièvre, a clever man of business, discerned a success where Doctor Minoret had seen nothing more than a preparation to be included in the pharmacopœia; he honestly divided the profits with the doctor, who was Rouelle's pupil in chemistry, as he was Bordeu's in medicine. It would have needed less to make him a materialist.

In 1778, when Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* was the rage, and men sometimes married for love, he married the daughter of Valentin Mirouët, the famous harpsichord player, herself a fine musician, but weakly and delicate, who died of the Revolution. Minoret was intimate with Robespierre, to whom he had once caused a gold medal to be awarded for a dissertation on these questions: "What is the origin of the opinion by which part of the shame attaching to the disgraceful punishment of a guilty man is reflected on all his family? Is this opinion generally useful or mischievous? And, supposing it to be mischievous, by what means can we avert the disastrous results?" The Academy of Arts and Sciences at Metz, to which Minoret belonged, must still have the original copy of this discourse. Although, thanks to this friendship, the doctor's wife had nothing to fear, she lived in such dread of being sent to the scaffold that this invincible terror aggravated an aneurism due to a too sensitive nature. In spite of all the precautions a man could take who idolized his wife, Ursule met the tumbrel full of condemned victims, and among them, as it happened, Madame Roland. The spectacle caused her death. Minoret, who had spoiled his Ursule, had refused her nothing, so that she had led a life of extravagant luxury, at her death found himself almost a poor man. Robespierre appointed him first physician to a hospital.

Although the name of Minoret had been somewhat famous during the vehement discussions to which Mesmerism had given rise, a fame which had recalled him now and then to his relations' memory, the Revolution was so powerful a solvent, and broke up so many family connections, that in

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1813 no one at Nemours knew even of Doctor Minoret's existence, when an unexpected meeting suggested to him the idea of returning, as hares do, to die in his form.

In traveling through France, where the eye is so soon fatigued by the monotony of the wide plains, who has not known the delightful sensation of discerning, from the top of a hill where the road turns or descends, and where he expected to see a dull landscape, a green valley watered by a stream, and a little town sheltered under a cliff, like a hive in the hollow of an old willow-tree? As he hears the postilion's cry of "Come up!" while he walks at his horse's side, the traveler shakes off sleep, and admires as a dream within a dream some lovely scene which is to the stranger what a fine passage in a book is to the reader—a brilliant idea of Nature's. This is the effect produced by the sudden view of Nemours on the road from Burgundy. It is seen from the height in an amphitheatre of naked rocks, gray, white, and black, like those which are scattered throughout the Forest of Fontainebleau; and from among them shoot up solitary trees, standing out against the sky, and giving a rural aspect to this sort of tumbledown rampart. This is the end of the long wooded slope which rises from Nemours to Bouron, sheltering the road on one side. At the foot of these cliffs spreads a meadow-land, through which the Loing flows, in level pools ending in little waterfalls. This exquisite tract of country, cut through by the Montargis road, is like an elaborate opera scene, the effects seem so carefully worked up.

One morning the doctor, who had been sent for by a rich invalid in Burgundy, and who was hastening back to Paris, not having mentioned at the last change of horses which road he wished to take, was unwittingly brought through Nemours, and between two naps saw once more the landscape familiar to his childhood. The doctor had by this time lost many of his old friends. The disciple of the Encyclopedia had lived to see La Harpe a convert, had buried Lebrun-Pindare, and Marie-Joseph de Chénier, and Morellet,

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and Madame Helvétius. He had seen the *quasi* overthrow of Voltaire under the attacks of Geoffroy, Fréron's successor. Hence he was thinking of retiring. And when the post-chaise stopped at the top of the High Street of Nemours, his good feeling prompted him to inquire after his family. Minoret-Levrault himself came out to see the doctor, who recognized in the postmaster his eldest brother's son. This nephew introduced as his wife the only daughter of old Levrault-Crémière, who, twelve years ago, had left her the posting business and the handsomest inn in Nemours.

"Well, nephew," said the doctor, "and have I any other heirs?"

"My aunt Minoret, your sister, married a Massin-Massin."

"Yes, the intendant at Saint-Lange."

"She died a widow, leaving one daughter, who has lately married a Crémière-Crémière, a very nice fellow, who so far has no appointment."

"To be sure; she is my own niece. Now, as my brother at sea died unmarried, and Captain Minoret was killed at Monte-Legino, and I am here, that is an end of my father's family. Have I any relations on my mother's side? She was a Jean-Massin-Levrault."

"Of the Jean-Massin-Levraults," replied Minoret-Levrault, "only one daughter survived, who married Monsieur Crémière-Levrault-Dionis, a dealer in corn and forage, who died on the scaffold. His wife died of a broken heart, and quite ruined, leaving one girl, married to a Levrault-Minoret, a farmer at Montereau, who is doing well; and their daughter has just married a Massin-Levrault, a notary's clerk at Montargis, where his father is a locksmith."

"So I have no lack of inheritors," said the doctor cheerfully, and he determined to walk round Nemours in his nephew's company.

The Loing meanders through the town, fringed with terraced gardens and neat houses that look as if happiness should inhabit there rather than elsewhere. When the doctor turned out of the High Street into the Rue des Bourgeois, Minoret-

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Levrault pointed out the property of Monsieur Levrault, a rich ironmaster at Paris, who, he said, was lately dead.

"There, uncle," said he, "is a pretty house to be sold, with a beautiful garden down to the river."

"Let us go in," said the doctor, seeing a house at the further side of a paved courtyard, shut in by the walls of houses on either side, hidden by clumps of trees and climbing plants.

"It is built on cellars," said the doctor as he went in, up a high outside stairway, decorated with blue and white earthenware pots in which the geraniums were still in bloom. The house, like most provincial residences, was pierced by a passage down the middle, leading from the courtyard to the garden; to the right was a single sitting-room with four windows, two to the yard, and two to the garden; but Levrault-Levrault had turned one of these into an entrance to a long conservatory built of brick, leading from the room to the river, where it ended in a hideous Chinese summer-house.

"Very good!" said the doctor. "By roofing and flooring this conservatory I could make a place for my books, and turn that amazing piece of architecture into a pretty little study."

On the other side of the passage, looking on to the garden, was a dining-room, decorated in imitation of lacquer, with a black ground and green and gold flowers; this was divided from the kitchen by the staircase. A little pantry behind the lower flight led from the dining-room to the kitchen, which had barred windows looking out on the courtyard. On the first floor were two sets of rooms, and above that wainscoted attics, quite habitable. After a brief inspection of this house, which was covered with green vine-trellis from top to bottom, on the courtyard front as well as on the garden side, with a terrace to the river edged with earthenware flower-vases, the doctor remarked:

"Levrault-Levrault must have spent a good deal here!"

"Oh, his weight in gold!" replied Minoret-Levrault. "He had a passion for flowers—such folly! 'What profit do they

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bring?' as my wife says. As you see, a painter came from Paris to paint his corridor with flowers in fresco. He put in whole plate mirrors everywhere. The ceilings were done up with cornices that cost six francs a foot. In the dining-room, the floor is of the finest inlay—such folly! The house is not worth a penny the more for it."

"Well, nephew, buy it for me. Let me know when it is settled; here is my address. The rest my lawyer will attend to.—Who lives opposite?" he asked as they went out.

"Some *émigrés*," said the postmaster; "a Chevalier de Portenduère."

When the house was bought, the distinguished physician, instead of coming to live in it, wrote orders to his nephew to let it. Levrault's Folly was taken by the notary of Nemours, who sold his business to Dionis his head clerk, and who died two years after, leaving the doctor burdened with a house to let just at the time when Napoleon's fate was being sealed in the neighborhood. The doctor's heirs, somewhat taken in, had at first supposed his wish to return to be a rich man's whim, and were in despair when, as they imagined, he had ties in Paris which kept him there, and would rob them of his leavings. However, Minoret-Levrault's wife seized this opportunity of writing to the doctor. The old man replied that as soon as peace should be signed, the roads cleared of soldiers, and communications free once more, he meant to live at Nemours. He made his appearance there with two of his clients, the architect to the hospital, and an upholsterer who undertook the repairs, the rearrangement of the rooms, and the removal of the furniture. Madame Minoret-Levrault proposed to him as caretaker the cook of the departed notary, and this he agreed to.

When the heirs learned that their uncle, or greatuncle Minoret, was really going to live at Nemours, their families were seized by an absorbing but almost legitimate curiosity, in spite of the political events which just then more especially agitated the district of the Gatinais and Brie. Was their uncle rich? Was he economical or extravagant? Would he

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leave a fine fortune or nothing at all? Had he invested in annuities? All this they at last came to know, but with infinite difficulty, and by means of much backstairs spying.

After the death of his wife Ursule Mirouët, from 1789 to 1813, the doctor, who in 1805 had been appointed consulting physician to the Emperor, must have made a great deal of money, but no one knew how much; he lived very simply, with no expenses beyond a carriage by the year, and a splendid apartment; he never entertained, and almost always dined out. His housekeeper, furious at not being asked to go with him to Nemours, told Zélie Levrault, the postmaster's wife, that to her knowledge he had fourteen thousand francs a year in consols. Now, after practising for twenty years in a profession which such appointments as head physician to a hospital, as physician to the Emperor, and as member of the Institut could not fail to have made lucrative, these fourteen thousand francs a year as dividends on repeated investments argued no more than a hundred and sixty thousand francs in savings! And to have laid by no more than eight thousand francs a year, the doctor must have had many vices or virtues to indulge. Still, neither the housekeeper, nor Zélie, nor any one else could divine the secret of so small a fortune. Minoret, who was greatly regretted in his own neighborhood, was one of the most liberal benefactors in Paris, and, like Larrey, kept his acts of benevolence a profound secret.

So it was with the liveliest satisfaction that his heirs watched the arrival of their uncle's handsome furniture and extensive library, and knew him to be an officer of the Legion of Honor, and made Chevalier of the Order of Saint-Michael by the King, in consequence, perhaps, of his retirement, which made way for some favorite. But the architect, the painters, and the upholsterers had finished everything in the most comfortable fashion, and still the doctor came not. Madame Minoret-Levrault, who watched the upholsterer and the architect as though her own property were at stake, discovered, through the inadvertence of a young man sent to

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put the books in order, that the doctor had in his care an orphan named Ursule. This news caused strange dismay in the town of Nemours. At last the old man came home in about the middle of January 1815, and settled down without any fuss, bringing with him a little girl of ten months and her nurse.

"Ursule cannot be his daughter; he is seventy-one years old!" cried the alarmed expectants.

"Whoever she may be, she will give us plenty of bother," said Madame Massin.

The doctor's reception of his grandniece on the mother's side was cold enough; her husband had just bought the place of registrar to the Justice of the peace, and they were the first to venture on any allusion to the difficulties of their position. Massin and his wife were not rich. Massin's father, an ironworker at Montargis, had been obliged to compound with his creditors, and worked now, at the age of sixty-seven, as hard as a young man; he would have nothing to leave. Madame Massin's father, Levrault-Minoret, had lately died at Montereau of grief at the results of the fighting—his farm burned down, his fields destroyed, and his cattle killed and eaten.

"We shall get nothing out of our greatuncle," said Massin to his wife, who was expecting her second baby.

But the doctor secretly gave them ten thousand francs, with which the registrar, as the friend of the notary and of the usher of Nemours, had begun money-lending; and he made the peasants pay such usurious interest that, at this later day, Goupil knew him to possess about eighty thousand francs of unconfessed capital.

As to his other niece, the doctor, by his influence in Paris, procured the post of receiver of public moneys at Nemours for Crémière, and advanced the necessary security. Though Minoret-Levrault wanted nothing, Zélie, very jealous of her uncle's liberality to his two nieces, came to see him with her son, then ten years old, whom she was about to send to school in Paris, where, as she said, education was very costly. As

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physician to Monsieur de Fontanes, the Doctor obtained a half-scholarship at the College of Louis le Grand for his grandnephew, who was placed in the fourth class.

Crémière, Massin, and Minoret-Levrault, all three very common men, were condemned beyond appeal by the doctor during the first two or three months, while they were trying to circumvent their future prospects rather than himself. Persons who act by instinct have this disadvantage as compared with those who have ideas—they are more easily seen through. The inspirations of instinct are too elementary, and appeal too directly to the eye, not to be detected at once; while to penetrate ideas, the device of the mind, equal intelligence is needed on both sides.

Having thus purchased the gratitude of his heirs, and to some extent stopped their mouths, the wily doctor alleged his occupations, his habits, and the care he gave to little Ursule, so as not to receive their visits, without however shutting his door to them: "He liked to dine alone; he went to bed and rose late; he had come back to his native place to enjoy repose and solitude." These whims in an old man seemed natural enough, and his expectant heirs were satisfied to pay him a weekly visit on Sundays between one and four, to which he vainly tried to put a stop by saying:

"Only come to see me when you want me."

The doctor, though he did not refuse his advice in serious cases, especially among the poor, would not become physician to the little asylum at Nemours, and declared that he would no longer practise.

"I have killed enough people!" said he, laughing, to the Curé Chaperon, who, knowing his benevolence, pleaded for the poor.

"He is quite an oddity."

This verdict on Doctor Minoret was the harmless revenge of wounded vanity, for the physician formed a little society for himself of persons who deserve to be contrasted with the heirs. Now, those of the town magnates who thought themselves worthy to swell the Court circle of a man wearing the

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black ribbon of Saint Michael, nourished a ferment of jealousy against the doctor and his privileged friends which, unhappily, was not impotent.

By a singularity which can only be explained by the saying that "Extremes meet," the materialist doctor and the priest of Nemours very soon were friends. The old man was very fond of backgammon, the favorite game of the clergy, and the Abbé was a match for the physician. This game thus became the first bond between them. Then Minoret was charitable, and the Curé of Nemours was the Fénelon of the Gatinais. They both were men of varied information; thus, in all Nemours, the man of God was the only man who could understand the atheist. In order to discuss any matter, two men must understand each other to begin with. What pleasure is there in saying sharp things to any one who does not feel them? The doctor and the priest had too much good taste, and had seen too much good company, not to observe its rules; they could therefore carry on the little warfare that is so necessary to conversation. Each hated the other's opinions, but they esteemed each other's character. If such contrasts and such sympathies are not the essential elements of intimacy, must we not despair of society, since, especially in France, some antagonism is indispensable to it? Contrariety of characters, not antagonism of opinions, is what gives rise to antipathies. So the Abbé Chaperon was the doctor's first friend at Nemours.

This priest, now sixty years of age, had been Curé of Nemours ever since the re-establishment of Catholic worship. He had refused promotion to be vicar-general of his diocese out of attachment to his flock. If those who were indifferent to religion thought the better of him for it, the faithful loved him all the more. Thus venerated by his flock, and esteemed by the community, the curé did good without inquiring too closely as to the religious views of those who were unfortunate. His own dwelling, scarcely supplied with furniture enough for the strictest necessities of life, was as cold and bare as a miser's hovel. Avarice and charity betray them-

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selves by similar results; does not charity lay up in heaven the treasure that the miser hoards on earth? The Abbé Chaperon took his servant to task for every expense, more severely than Gobseck ever scolded his—if, indeed, that notorious Jew ever had a servant. The good priest often sold his silver shoe buckles and breeches buckles to give the money to some poor wretch he had found destitute. On seeing him come out of church with the tongues of his knee-straps pulled through the buttonholes, the devout ladies of the town would trot off to look for the curé's buckles at the one jeweler's and watchmaker's shop in Nemours, and reproach their pastor as they restored them to him. He never bought himself linen or clothes, and wore them till they were dropping to pieces. His underclothing, thick with darns, fretted his skin like a hair-shirt. Then Madame de Portenduère, or some other good soul, plotted with his housekeeper to replace his old shirts or cloth clothes by new ones while he slept; and the priest did not always immediately perceive the exchange. He dined off pewter, with iron forks and spoons; when, on great occasions, he had to receive his subordinate clergy and other curés, a duty that falls on the head of a district, he borrowed silver and table-linen from his friend the atheist.

"My plate is working out its salvation," the doctor would say.

His good deeds, which were sooner or later found out, and which he always reinforced with spiritual comfort, were carried out with sublime simplicity. And such a life was all the more meritorious because the Abbé was full of erudition, as vast as it was various, and a man of superior abilities. In him refinement and elegance, the inseparable attributes of simplicity, added charm to elocution worthy of a prelate. His manners, his character, and his conduct gave to his society the exquisite flavor of all that is at once candid and subtle in a lofty intellect. Enjoying pleasantry, in a drawing-room he was never the priest. Until Doctor Minoret's arrival, this worthy man left his light under a bushel without a regret; but he no doubt liked him the better for calling it into play.

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Possessed of a fairly good library and two thousand francs a year when he came to Nemours, in 1829 the curé had nothing left but the income from his church, and that he gave away almost entirely year by year. A man of good judgment in delicate affairs or in misfortune, more than one of those who never went to church in search of consolation went to the priest's house in quest of advice. An anecdote will suffice to complete this portrait of a character. Certain peasants, seldom it is true, but bad folks at any rate, said they were in danger of imprisonment for debt, or had themselves sued falsely, to stimulate the Abbé's beneficence. They deceived their wives; and the women, seeing themselves threatened with eviction and their cows seized, by their innocent tears, deceived the poor curé, who would find the seven or eight hundred francs demanded, which the peasants would spend on a little plot of ground. When some pious persons, churchwardens, pointed out the fraud, begging the curé to consult them for the future, that he might not be the victim of greed, he replied:

"Perhaps those men would have committed some crime to get their acre of land, and is it not a form of good to hinder evil?"

The reader may perhaps find pleasure in this sketch of a figure, remarkable because science and literature had entered that heart and that capable brain without corrupting them in any way.

At sixty years of age the Abbé Chaperon's hair was perfectly white, so keenly was he alive to the sufferings of others, and so deeply had the events of the Revolution affected him. Twice imprisoned for having twice refused to take certain oaths, he had twice (to use his own expression) said his *In manus*. He was of middle height, neither stout nor thin. His face, deeply furrowed, hollow-cheeked, and colorless, attracted the eye at once by the perfect calm of the lines and the purity of its outline, which looked as if fringed with light. There is a mysterious kind of radiance from the face of a perfectly chaste man. Brown eyes, with bright pupils,

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gave life to irregular features, under a powerful forehead. His gaze exercised a dominion that may be explained by its sweetness, which did not exclude strength. The arches of his brows were like deep vaults, shadowed by thick gray eyebrows, which frightened no one. As he had lost many teeth, his mouth was shapeless, and his cheeks were hollow; but this ruin was not without charm, and his kindly wrinkles seemed always to be smiling at you.

He walked with difficulty, having very tender feet, without being gouty; so in all weathers he wore soft calf-skin shoes. He thought trousers unsuitable to a priest, and always appeared in stout, black worsted stockings, knitted by his housekeeper, and black cloth knee-breeches. He did not go out in his priest's gown, but in a brown overcoat and the three-cornered hat he had always bravely worn, even in the worst times. This fine and noble old man, whose face was always beautified by the serenity of a blameless soul, was destined to have so great an influence on men and things in this narrative that it was necessary to go to the sources of his authority.

Minoret took in three papers—one liberal, one ministerial, and one ultra—some periodical magazines and scientific journals, of which the accumulation swelled his library. These journals, the encyclopedist, and his books were an attraction to a retired captain of the Royal Swedish regiment, Monsieur de Jordy, a gentleman, a Voltairean, and an old bachelor, who lived on sixteen hundred francs a year, partly pension, and partly an annuity. After reading the papers for some days, through the intervention of the curé, M. de Jordy thought it becoming to call and thank the doctor. From his very first visit the old captain, formerly a professor in the military college, won the doctor's good graces, and the visit was promptly returned.

Monsieur de Jordy, a lean, dry little man, but tormented by blood to the head, though he had a very pale face, was striking-looking by reason of a fine forehead, like Charles XII., over which his hair was cropped short, like that of the

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soldier-king. His blue eyes, which would make one think "Love has passed that way," though they were deeply sad, were interesting at first sight, for their gaze betrayed remembrance; but on this point he kept his own secret so completely that his old friends never detected him in any allusion to his past life, nor ever heard one of the exclamations which are sometimes called forth by a similarity in misfortune. He hid the painful mystery of the past under philosophical gaiety; but when he thought himself alone, his movements, weighted by a slowness evidently deliberate rather than senile, bore witness to an ever-present painful thought. The Abbé, indeed, had called him "The Christian without knowing it."

Always wearing a blue cloth suit, his somewhat stiff demeanor, and his style of dress, betrayed old habits of military discipline. His voice, soft and musical, spoke to the soul. His fine hands, and the shape of his face, recalling that of the Comte d'Artois, by showing how handsome he must have been in his youth, made the mystery of his life even more impenetrable. It was impossible not to wonder what was the disaster that had stricken a man so handsome, with courage, grace, learning, and all the most delightful qualities of heart which had formerly been united in his person. Monsieur de Jordy always shuddered at the name of Robespierre. He used a great deal of snuff, but, strange to say, he gave it up for little Ursule, who at first showed a dislike to him in consequence of this habit. Whenever he saw the child, the captain would gaze at her with lingering, almost passionate looks. He was so devoted to her games, and took so much interest in her, that this affection drew still tighter his tie to the doctor, who, on his part, never dared say to the old bachelor:

"Have you too lost children?"

There are beings, good and patient as he was, who go through life with a bitter memory in their hearts, and a smile, at once tender and sorrowful, on their lips, bearing in them the answer to the riddle, but never allowing it to be guessed —out of pride, or scorn, or perhaps revenge—having none but God to trust in or to comfort them. At Nemours,

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whither, like the doctor, he had come to die in peace, Monsieur de Jordy visited nobody but the curé, who was always at the service of his parishioners, and Madame de Portenduère, who went to bed at nine o'clock. Thus he, weary of the struggle, had at last taken to going to bed early too, notwithstanding the thorns that stuffed his pillow. Thus it was a happy chance for the doctor, as well as for the captain, to meet a man who had known the same society, who spoke the same language, with whom he could exchange ideas, and who went to bed late. When once Monsieur de Jordy, the Abbé Chaperon, and Minoret had spent an evening together, they found it so pleasant that the priest and the soldier came in every evening at nine o'clock, when, little Ursule being in bed, the old man was free. And they all three sat talking till midnight, or one o'clock.

Before long the trio became a quartette. Another man, who knew life well, and who had acquired in his profession that large-mindedness, learning, accumulated observation, shrewdness, and power of conversation which the soldier, the physician, and the priest had gained in dealing with souls, with diseases, and with teaching—the judge of the district, Monsieur Bongrand—got wind of the pleasures of these evenings, and made himself acquainted with the doctor.

Before being appointed Justice at Nemours, Monsieur Bongrand had for ten years been attorney at Melun, where he himself had pleaded in court, as is usual (in France) in towns where there is no bar. At the age of forty-five he found himself a widower; but feeling too active to do nothing, he had applied for the appointment as Justice of the peace at Nemours, which had fallen vacant some months before the doctor's arrival. The Keeper of the Seals is always glad to find a practical lawyer, and particularly a well-to-do man, to hold these important posts. Monsieur Bongrand lived very simply at Nemours on his salary of fifteen hundred francs, and could thus devote the rest of his income to his son, who was studying for the bar at Paris, and at the same

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time working up legal procedure under Derville, the famous attorney.

The elder Bongrand was a good deal like a retired brigadier; his was a face, not naturally pale, but washed out, where business, disappointment, and disgust had left their marks; it was wrinkled by much thought, and also by the pinched look of a man who is constantly forced not to say all he thinks; but it was often illuminated by the smiles peculiar to men, who, by turns, believe everything or believe nothing, who are accustomed to see and hear everything without surprise, to sound the depths which self-interest reveals at the bottom of men's hearts. Under his hair, which was faded rather than gray, and brushed in smooth waves on his head, rose a sagacious brow, its yellow tint harmonizing with that of his thin locks. His face, being rather short, gave him some resemblance to a fox, all the more so because his nose was short and sharp. As he spoke, his wide mouth, like that of all great talkers, sputtered out a spray of white foam-stars, which made his conversation so showery, that Goupil used to say, maliciously: "You want an umbrella while you listen to him," or, "The Justice of the peace rains decisions."

His eyes seemed keen behind his spectacles, but if he took them off, his expression was dulled, and he looked stupid. Though lively, and even jovial, by his manner he gave himself rather too much the airs of a man of importance. His hands were almost always in his trousers pockets, and he only took them out to settle his spectacles on his nose with a sort of mocking gesture, preliminary to some acute remark or clinching argument. These movements, with his loquacity and his innocent pretentiousness, betrayed the country lawyer; but such slight defects were merely superficial; he made up for them by an acquired geniality, which an exact moralist might define as the indulgence inherent in superiority. And if he had somewhat the look of a fox, he was also supposed to be extremely wily, without being dishonest. His cunning was the exercise of perspicacity. Do we not call folks cunning who can foresee results, and avoid the snares laid for

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them? The lawyer was fond of whist, a game which the doctor and the captain played, and which the priest soon learned.

This little party created an oasis for themselves in Minoret's drawing-room. The Nemours town doctor, who was not deficient in education or manners, and who respected Minoret as an ornament to the profession, was also admitted; but his business and fatigues, which compelled him to go to bed early that he might rise betimes, hindered him from being so regular a visitor as the doctor's three friends were.

The meetings of these five superior men, who alone in all the town had enough general culture to understand each other, account for Minoret's aversion for his heirs; though he might have to leave them his fortune, he could not admit them to his society. Whether the postmaster, the registrar, and the receiver understood this distinction, or were reassured by their uncle's loyal nature and benefactions, they ceased at any rate to call on him, to his very great satisfaction.

The four old players of whist and backgammon had, within seven or eight months of the doctor's settling at Nemours, formed a compact and exclusive little circle, which came to each of them as a sort of autumnal brotherhood, quite unlooked for, and therefore all the sweeter and more enjoyable. This family party of choice spirits found in Ursule a child whom each could adopt after his manner: the priest thought of her soul, the lawyer made himself her protector, the soldier promised himself that he would be her tutor; as for Minoret, he was father, mother, and doctor in one.

After acclimatizing himself, as it were, the old man fell into habits of life, regulated as it must be in all provincial towns. With Ursule as an excuse, he never received any one in the morning, and asked nobody to dinner; his friends could join him at six o'clock, and remain with him till midnight. The first comers found newspapers on the drawing-room table, and read while waiting for the others, or sometimes went to meet the doctor if he were out walking. These

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quiet habits were not merely the requirements of old age; they were also a wise and deep-laid precaution on the part of a man of the world to prevent his happiness being troubled by the restless curiosity of his relations, or the petty gossip of a country town. He would concede nothing to the capricious goddess Public Opinion, whose tyranny—one of the curses of France—was about to be established, and to make our whole country one single province. So as soon as the little girl was weaned and could walk, he sent away the cook whom his niece, Madame Minoret-Levrault, had found for him, on discovering that she reported to the postmistress everything that went on in his house.

Little Ursule's nurse, the widow of a poor laborer owning no name but that he was christened by, and who came from Bougival, had lost her last baby at the age of six months; and the doctor, knowing her to be an honest creature, engaged her as wet nurse, in pity for her destitution. Having no money, and coming from La Bresse, where her family lived in poverty, Antoinette Patris, widow of Pierre *dit* de Bougival, naturally attached herself to Ursule, as foster-mothers do attach themselves to a sucking child as it grows up. This blind motherly affection was reinforced by domestic attachment. Warned beforehand of the doctor's intentions, La Bougival learned to cook on the sly, made herself tidy, and fell into the old man's ways. She took the greatest care of the furniture and the rooms; in short, she was indefatigable. Not only did the doctor insist that his private life should be screened from the world; he had reasons of his own for keeping all knowledge of his affairs from his heirs. Thus by the time he had been at Nemours a year, there was no one in his house but La Bougival on whose discretion he could absolutely rely, and he disguised his real reasons under the all-powerful plea of economy. To the great joy of his family, he became miserly. Without underhand wheedling, solely as a result of her solicitude and devotedness, La Bougival, who at the time when this drama opens was forty-three years old, was housekeeper to the doctor

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and his little protégée, the pivot on which the whole house turned, in fact, his confidential servant. She had been named La Bougival in consequence of the impossibility of calling her by her Christian name of Antoinette, for names and faces must follow a law of harmony.

The doctor's avarice was not an empty word; but it was for a purpose. From 1817 he gave up two of his newspapers, and ceased to subscribe to periodical magazines. His annual outlay, which all Nemours could reckon, was not more than eighteen hundred francs. Like all old men, his requirements in linen, clothing, and shoes were a mere trifle. Every six months he made a journey to Paris, no doubt to draw and invest his dividends. In fifteen years he never said a word that had anything to do with his affairs. His confidence in Bongrand was of later date; he never spoke to him of his plans till after the Revolution of 1830. These were the only things in the doctor's life known at that time to the townsfolk and his heirs. As to his political opinions, as his house was rated at no more than a hundred francs in taxes, he never interfered, and would have nothing to say to subscriptions on either the Royalist or the Liberal side. His well-known horror of priests and his deism so little loved demonstrations, that when his nephew, Minoret-Levrault, sent a traveling bookseller to his house to propose that he should buy the "Curé Meslier," and General Foy's addresses, he turned the man out of the house. Tolerance on such terms was quite inexplicable to the Liberals of Nemours.

The doctor's three collateral heirs, Minoret-Levrault and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Massin-Levrault, junior, Monsieur and Madame Crémière-Crémière—who shall be called simply Crémière, Massin, and Minoret, since such elaborate distinctions are only needed in the Gatinais,—these three families, too busy to create another centre, met constantly, as people only meet in small towns. The postmaster gave a grand dinner on his son's birthday, a ball at the Carnival, and another on the anniversary of his wedding day, and to these he asked all the townsfolk of Nemours. The

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tax-receiver also gathered his relations and friends about him twice a year. The Justice's registrar being, as he said, too poor to launch out in such extravagance, lived narrowly in a house half-way down the High Street, of which the ground floor was let to his sister, the mistress of the letter-post—another benefaction of the doctor's. But in the course of the year these three inheritors or their wives met in the town or out walking, at the market in the morning, on their door steps, or on Sunday, after Mass, on the Church Square, as at this moment, so that they saw each other every day.

Now for the last three years more especially, the doctor's age, his miserliness, and his fortune justified allusions or direct remarks relating to their prospects, which, passing from one to another, at last made the doctor and his heirs equally famous. For these six months not a week had passed without the friends and neighbors of the Minoret family speaking to them with covert envy of the day when the old man's eyes would be closed, and his money boxes opened.

"Doctor Minoret may be a physician, and have come to an understanding with Death," said one; "but only God is eternal."

"Bah! he will bury us all; he is in better health than we are," one of the expectant heirs would reply hypocritically.

"Well, if you don't get it, your children will—unless that little Ursule——"

"He will not leave her everything!"

Ursule, as Madame Massin had prognosticated, was the real bugbear of the family, the Damocles' sword; and Madame Crémière's favorite last word, "Those who live will know," showed plainly enough that they wished her ill rather than well.

The tax-receiver and the registrar, who were poor by comparison with the postmaster, had often, by way of conversation, calculated the doctor's property. As they walked along by the canal, or on the highroad, if they saw their uncle coming they looked at each other piteously.

"He has provided himself with some elixir of life, no doubt," said one.

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"He is in league with the devil," said the other.

"He ought to leave us the lion's share, for that fat Minoret wants for nothing."

"Oh, Minoret has a son who will get rid of a great deal of his money for him!"

"How much, now, do you suppose the doctor's fortune may run to?" said the registrar.

"Well, at the end of twelve years, twelve thousand francs saved every year come to a hundred and forty-four thousand, and compound interest will have produced at least a hundred thousand francs more; but as, under his Paris lawyer's advice, he must have turned his money to advantage now and again, and as he would have invested up to 1822 at eight or seven and a half per cent in government securities, the old fellow must at this time have about four hundred thousand francs to turn over, to say nothing of his fourteen thousand francs at five per cent, worth one hundred and sixteen at the present moment. If he were to die to-morrow and leave Ursule an equal share, we should get seven to eight hundred thousand francs, not to mention the house and furniture."

"Well, a hundred thousand to Minoret, a hundred thousand to the little girl, and three hundred thousand to each of us. That would be a fair thing."

"Yes, that would keep us in shoe-leather."

"If he should do that," cried Massin, "I would sell my appointment and buy a fine estate. I would try to be made judge at Fontainebleau, and be elected deputy."

"I would buy a stockbroker's business," said the tax-receiver.

"Unfortunately, that little girl on his arm and the curé have so blockaded him that we cannot get at him."

"At any rate, we are quite certain that he will leave nothing to the Church."

It may now be understood that the heirs were in agonies at seeing their uncle going to Mass. The most stupid have wit enough to imagine injury to their interests. Interest is

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the moving spirit of the peasant as of the diplomate, and on that ground the most stupid in appearance may perhaps prove the sharpest. Hence this terrible argument: "If that little Ursule is able to bring her protector within the pale of the Church, she will certainly have power to secure her own inheritance," blazed out in letters of fire in the mind of the most obtuse of the inheritors. The postmaster had forgotten the enigma in his son's letter in hurrying to the Square; for if the doctor were really in church following the order of prayer, they might lose two hundred and fifty thousand francs. It must be admitted that their fears were based on the strongest and most legitimate of social sentiments, namely, on family interest.

"Well, Monsieur Minoret," said the mayor—a retired miller who had turned Royalist, a Levrault-Crémière—"when the devil was old, the devil a monk would be! Your uncle, I am told, has come over to us."

"Better late than never, cousin," replied the postmaster, trying to conceal his annoyance.

"How that man would laugh if we were disappointed! He is quite capable of making his son marry that cursed little hussy. May the devil get his tail round her!" cried Crémière, shaking his fist at the mayor as he went in under the porch.

"What on earth is the matter with old Crémière?" said the butcher, the eldest son of a Levrault-Levrault. "Is he not pleased to see his uncle take the road to paradise?"

"Who would ever have believed it?" said the registrar.

"It is never safe to say to the well, 'I will never drink of your water!'" replied the notary, who, seeing the group from afar, left his wife to go on to church alone.

"Now, Monsieur Dionis," said Crémière, taking the lawyer by the arm, "what do you advise us to do in these circumstances?"

"I advise you," said Dionis, addressing the expectant heirs, "to go to bed and get up at the usual hours, to eat your soup before it gets cold, to put your shoes on your feet and your

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hat on your head; in short, to go on exactly as if nothing had happened."

"You are a poor comforter!" said Massin with a cunning glance.

In spite of his short, fat figure, and his thick, crushed-looking features, Crémière-Dionis was as slippery as silk. To make a fortune he was in secret partnership with Massin, whom he no doubt kept informed when peasants were in difficulties, and which plots of ground he might devour. So the two men could pick and choose, never letting a good chance escape them, and dividing the profits of this usury on mortgage, which delays, though it cannot hinder, the action of the peasantry on the land. Hence Dionis felt a keen interest in the doctor's will, less on account of Minoret the postmaster and Crémière the tax-receiver than for his friend the registrar's sake. Massin's share would, sooner or later, come to swell the capital on which the partners traded in the district.

"We must try to find out, through Monsieur Bongrand, who has fired this shot," replied the lawyer in a low voice, as a warning to Massin to lie low.

"What are you doing here, Minoret?" was suddenly heard from a little woman who bore down on the group, in the midst of which the postmaster was visible as a tower. "You do not know what has become of Désiré, and you seem to have taken root there on your two feet when I fancied you were on horseback!—Good-morning, ladies and gentlemen!"

This spare little woman, pale and fair, dressed in a cotton gown—white, with a large flowered pattern in chocolate-color—in an embroidered cap trimmed with lace, and a small green shawl over her flat shoulders, was the postmistress, who made the stoutest postilions quake, the servants, and the carters; who kept the till and the books; and managed the house with her finger and eye, as the neighbors were in the habit of saying. Like a true, thrifty housewife, she had not a single article of jewelry. She did not "favor frippery and trash," as she put it; she liked what was durable,

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and in spite of its being Sunday, she had on her black silk apron with pockets, in which a bunch of keys jingled. Her shrill voice was ear-splitting. In spite of the sweet blue of her eyes, her hard gaze was in evident harmony with the thin lips of a tightly-set mouth, and a high, projecting, and very despotic brow. Her glance was sharp, sharper still were her gestures and words. "Zélie being obliged to have will enough for two, had always had enough for three," Goupil used to say; and it was he who noted the successive reigns of three young post-boys, very neatly kept, whom Zélie had set up after seven years' service. Indeed, the spiteful clerk always called them Postilion I., Postilion II., and Postilion III. But the small influence exerted in the house by these young men, and their perfect obedience, proved that Zélie had simply and purely taken an interest in really good fellows.

"Ay, Zélie values zeal," the clerk would reply to any one who made such a remark.

This piece of scandal was, however, improbable. Since the birth of her son, whom she nursed herself, though it was impossible to see how, the postmistress had thought only of adding to her fortune, and devoted herself without respite to the management of her immense business. To rob her of a truss of straw or a few bushels of oats, to detect her in error in the most complicated accounts, was a thing impossible, though she wrote a cat's scrawl, and knew nothing of arithmetic beyond addition and subtraction. She walked out solely to inspect her hay, her oats, and her after-crops; then she would send her man to fetch in the crops, and her postilions to pack the hay, and tell them within a hundredweight how much they could get off this or that field. Though she was the soul of the huge body known as Minoret-Levrault, and led him by his idiotically snub nose, she was liable to the frights which more or less constantly agitate those who quell and lead wild beasts, and she quarreled with him frequently. The post-boys knew by the rowings they got from Minoret when his wife had scolded him, for her rage glanced

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off on to them. But, indeed, Madame Minoret was as shrewd as she was avaricious.

"Where would Minoret be without his wife?" was a byword in more than one household in the town.

"When you hear what is happening to us you will be beside yourself too," replied the Master of Nemours.

"Well, what is it?"

"Ursule has taken Doctor Minoret to Mass."

Zélie Levrault's eyes seemed to dilate; for an instant she was silent, yellow with rage; then crying, "I must see it to believe it," she rushed into the church. The Host was just elevated. Favored by the general attitude of worship, she was able to look along each row of chairs and benches as she went up past the chapels to the place where Ursule knelt, and by her side she saw the old man, bare-headed.

If you can recall the portraits of Barbé-Marbois, Boissy-d'Anglas, Morellet, Helvétius, and Frederick the Great, you will have an exact idea of the head of Doctor Minoret, who in his green old age was a good deal like these famous personages. These heads, struck as it might seem from the same die, for they lend themselves to the medalist's art, present a severe and almost puritanical profile, cold coloring, a mathematical brain, a certain narrowness of face, as if it had been squeezed, astute eyes, grave lips, and something aristocratic in sentiment rather than in habits, in the intellect rather than in the character. They all have lofty foreheads, receding a little at the top, which betrays a tendency to materialism. You will find all these leading characteristics of the head, and the look of the face, in the portraits of the encyclopedists, of the orators of the Girondins, and of the men of that time whose religious belief was almost a blank, and who, though calling themselves deists, were atheists. A deist is an atheist with an eye to the off-chance of some advantage.

Old Minoret had a forehead of this type, but furrowed with wrinkles, and it derived a sort of childlike ingenuousness from the way in which his silver hair, combed back like a

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woman's at her toilet, curled in thin locks on his black coat; for he persisted in dressing, as in the days of his youth, in black silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, knee-breeches of rich silk, a white waistcoat, across which lay the black ribbon of Saint Michael, and a black coat with the red rosette in the buttonhole. This characteristic head, its cold pallor softened by the ivory-yellow tone of old age, was under the full light from a window. At the moment when the postmistress came in, the doctor's blue eyes, with slightly reddened lids and pathetic lines, were fixed on the altar; new conviction had given them a new expression. His spectacles, laid in his prayer-book, marked the page where he had ceased to read. With his arms folded across his breast, the tall, spare old man, standing in an attitude which proclaimed the full power of all his faculties, and something immovable in his faith, never ceased from gazing at the altar with a humble look, rejuvenescent through hope; not choosing to see his nephew's wife, who stood rooted almost face to face with him, as if to reproach him for this return to God.

On seeing every face turned to look at her, Zélie hastily retired, and came out on to the Square again less precipitately than she had gone into the church; she had counted on that inheritance, and the inheritance was becoming problematical. She found the registrar, the tax-receiver, and their wives in even greater consternation than before. Goupil had taken pleasure in tormenting them.

"It is not here, on the Square, and under the eyes of the whole town, that we can discuss our private affairs," said the postmistress; "come to my house. You will not be in the way, Monsieur Dionis," she added to the lawyer.

So the probable disinheritance of the Massins, the Crémières, and the postmaster was to become the talk of the country.

Just as the heirs and the notary were about to cross the Square on their way to the house, the clatter of the diligence arriving at top speed made a tremendous noise; it stopped at the coach-office, a few yards from the church, at the top of the High Street.

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"Why, like you, Minoret, I had forgotten Désiré," said Zélie. "Let us go to meet him; he is almost a lawyer now, and this business is partly his concern."

The arrival of a diligence is always a diversion, and when it is behind time something interesting may be expected; so the crowd rushed to see the "Ducler."

"There is Désiré," was a general cry.

At once the tyrant and the ringleader of fun in Nemours, Désiré's visits always brought some excitement to the town. A favorite with the young men, to whom he was liberal, his presence was to them a stimulant; but his pleasures were so much dreaded, that more than one family was glad that his studies for the law should be carried on in Paris. Désiré Minoret, slight, thin, and fair like his mother, with her blue eyes and colorless complexion, smiled at the crowd from the coach door, and jumped out to embrace her. A slight sketch of this youth will explain Zélie's flattered pride on beholding him.

The young law-student wore neat little boots, white English drill trousers with patent leather straps, a handsome cravat carefully folded, and a still handsomer pin, a smart fancy waistcoat, and in its pocket a flat watch with a dangling chain; a short blue cloth overcoat, and a gray hat. But vulgar riches were betrayed in the gold buttons to his waistcoat, and a ring worn outside his gloves of purplish kid. He carried a cane with a chased gold knob.

"You will lose your watch," said his mother as she kissed him.

"It is worn so," said he, submitting to his father's embrace.

"Well, cousin, so you will soon be a full-blown lawyer?" said Massin.

"I am to be sworn when the courts reopen," said he, waving an acknowledgment of the friendly greetings of the crowd.

"Then we shall have some fun?" said Goupil, shaking hands with him.

"Ah! there you are, old ape!" answered Désiré.

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"Having worked for your license, you think you may take it, I suppose?" retorted the clerk, mortified at being so familiarly treated before so many people.

"For his lies?—Take what?" asked Madame Crémière of her husband.

"You know all my things, Cabirolle!" cried Désiré to the old purple and pimply-faced conductor. "Have them all taken down to the house."

"Your horses are in a lather," said Zélie roughly to Cabirolle. "Have you no sense at all that you drive them like that? You are a greater brute than they are."

"But Monsieur Désiré insisted on getting on as fast as possible, to relieve your anxiety."

"As there had been no accident, why risk killing your horses?" said she.

Friendly greetings, hand-shaking, and the eagerness of his young acquaintance surrounding Désiré, all the incidents of arrival, and details as to the accident which had occasioned the delay, took up so much time that the party of inheritors, increased by their friends, got back to the church just as Mass was ended. By a trick of Chance, which allows itself strange caprices, Désiré saw Ursule under the church porch as he passed, and was quite startled by her beauty. The young man paused, and necessarily checked his parents.

Ursule had taken her godfather's arm, which obliged her to hold her prayer-book in her right hand and her parasol in the left; and in doing so, she displayed the native grace with which graceful women manage to get over the little difficulties of their dainty womanhood. If the mind betrays itself in everything, it may be said that her demeanor expressed her exquisite ingenuousness.

Ursule wore a white muslin dress, shaped loosely like a dressing-gown, with blue bows at intervals; the cape, trimmed with similar ribbon run into a wide hem, and fastened like the dress with bows, suggested the beauty of her figure; her throat, of ivory whiteness, was thrown into

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charming relief by all this blue—the true cosmetic for fair complexions.

A blue sash, with floating ends, marked a girlish waist and what seemed a pliant figure, one of the most seductive graces of woman. She wore a rice-straw hat simply trimmed with ribbons to match those on her dress. It was tied with a bow under her chin; and this, while enhancing the excessive whiteness of the hat, did not detract from that of her lovely complexion.

Her fine, bright hair, which she herself dressed in wide plaits, fastened into loops on each side of her face *à la Berthe,* caught the eye by the shining bosses of the crossing tresses. Her gray eyes, soft, though proud, harmonized with a well-moulded brow. A delicate color flushed her cheeks like a rosy cloud, and gave life to a face that was regular without being insipid, for nature had bestowed on her the rare privilege of a pure outline with an expressive countenance.

The virtue of her life was written in the perfect accordance of her features, her movements, and the general expression of her individuality, which might serve as a model of Trustfulness or of Modesty.

Her health was excellent, but not coarsely robust, so that she looked elegant. Her light gloves left it to be inferred that she had pretty hands. Her arched and slender feet were shod with dainty little bronze kid boots, trimmed with a fringe of brown silk. Her blue sash, in which a little flat watch made a boss, while a blue purse with gold tassels hung through it, attracted the eye of every woman there.

"He has given her a new watch," said Madame Crémière, squeezing her husband's arm.

"Why, it is Ursule!" exclaimed Désiré. "I did not recognize her."

"Well, my dear uncle, this is an event!" said the postmaster, pointing to where the whole town had fallen into two lines along the old man's way. "Everybody wants to see you."

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"Is it the Abbé Chaperon or Ursule who has converted you, uncle?" said Massin, bowing with Jesuitical obsequiousness to the doctor and his companion.

"It is Ursule," said the old man curtly, and without stopping, as a man who is annoyed.

The evening before, as he finished his rubber with Ursule, the town doctor, and Bongrand, he had said, "I shall go to Mass to-morrow;" and even if the Justice had not then replied, "Your heirs will never have another night's sleep!" a single glance now would have sufficed to enable the sagacious and clear-sighted old man to read the temper of his heirs in the look of their faces. Zélie's irruption into the church, the flash he had caught in her eye, the meeting of all the interested parties on the Square, and the expression of their countenances on seeing Ursule,—all revealed freshly revived hatred and sordid fears.

"This is your doing, mademoiselle," said Madame Crémière, interposing with a low courtesy. "It is no trouble to you to work miracles."

"The miracle is God's, madame," replied Ursule.

"Oh, indeed! God's," exclaimed Minoret-Levrault. "My father-in-law used to say that God was a name for many a dark horse."

"His ideas were those of a horse coper!" said the doctor severely.

"Now, then," said Minoret to his wife and son, "are you not coming to pay your respects to my uncle?"

"I could not contain myself face to face with that sneaking slut!" exclaimed Zélie, leading away her son.

"You would be wise, uncle," said Madame Massin, "not to go to church without a little black velvet cap; the parish church is very damp."

"Pah! niece," said the old man, looking round at his followers. "The sooner I am laid to rest, the sooner you will dance."

He walked on, dragging Ursule with him, and seeming in such haste that they were left to themselves.

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"Why do you answer them with such hard words? It is not kind," said Ursule, shaking his arm with a little refractory gesture.

"My hatred for hypocrites has always been the same, before as well as since my conversion. I have done them all kindness, and I do not ask for gratitude; but not one of all those people sent a flower on your birthday, the only day I keep."

At some little distance from the doctor and Ursule, Madame de Portenduère was dragging herself along, overwhelmed, as it seemed, with suffering. She was one of those old women in whose dress we may still trace the spirit of the last century, who wear pansy-colored gowns with tight sleeves of a cut now only to be seen in portraits by Madame Lebrun; black lace scarves, and bonnets of extinct shapes, in harmony with their slow and solemn gait; as if they still walked in hoops, and felt them about them, as those who have had an arm cut off sometimes move the limb they have lost. Their long, pale faces, with deeply shadowed eyes and blighted brows, are not devoid of a certain melancholy grace in spite of a front of dejected curls; they drape their heads in old lace, which now has no light flutter over their cheeks; but over the whole mass of ruins predominates an indescribable dignity of manner and look.

This old lady's red and puckered eyes plainly showed that she had wept during the service. She walked like a person in some anxiety, and seemed to be expecting somebody, for she looked back. Now, that Madame de Portenduère should look back was an event as serious as Doctor Minoret's conversion.

"To whom can Madame de Portenduère owe a grudge?" said Madame Massin, as she came up with the heirs, who were dumfounded by the doctor's retorts.

"She is looking for the curé," said Dionis, striking his forehead like a man suddenly struck by a remembrance or some forgotten idea. "I have it! I see my way; the inheritance is saved! Come, we will all breakfast cheerfully with Madame Minoret."

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The eagerness with which the whole party followed the notary to the posting house may easily be imagined. Goupil clung to his comrade, taking his arm, saying in his ear with a revolting smile: "There are crayfish!"

"What do I care?" replied the son of the house with a shrug. "I am madly in love with Florine, the most heavenly creature in the world."

"What on earth is Florine without a surname?" asked Goupil. "I am too much your friend to allow you to be made a fool of by hussies."

"Florine is adored by the famous Nathan, and my folly is of no use, for she positively refuses to marry me."

"Girls who are rash with their bodies are sometimes prudent with their brains," said Goupil.

"If you could but see her, only once, you would not make use of such expressions," said Désiré languishingly.

"If I saw you destroying your prospects for what can be only a fancy," retorted Goupil, with a warmth that might perhaps have taken in Bongrand, "I would go and wreck that doll as Varney wrecked Amy Robsart in Kenilworth! Your wife ought to be a d'Aiglemont, a Mademoiselle du Rouvre, and open your way to being a deputy to the Chamber. My future is mortgaged to yours, and I will not allow you to play the fool."

"I am rich enough to be content with happiness," replied Désiré.

"Well, what are you two plotting?" said Zélie to Goupil, hailing the two young men, who were standing together in the wide stable-yard.

The doctor turned down the Rue des Bourgeois, and walked on, as briskly as a young man, to his house, where, in the course of the past week, the strange event had taken place which was just now the ruling thought of all the town of Nemours, and of which some account must be given to render this story, and the notary's remark to the heirs, perfectly intelligible.

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The doctor's father-in-law, the famous harpsichord player and instrument-maker, Valentin Mirouët, one of our most celebrated organists, died in 1785, leaving a natural son, the child of his old age, whom he had recognized and called by his name, but who was a thorough scapegrace. He had not the consolation of seeing this spoilt child when on his death-bed; Joseph Mirouët, a singer and a composer, after coming out in Italian opera under an assumed name, had run away to Germany with a young girl. The old instrument-maker recommended this lad, who was full of talent, to his son-in-law, explaining that his object in not marrying the boy's mother was to protect the interests of his daughter, Madame Minoret. The doctor promised to give the unfortunate youth half of the property left by the old man, whose stock and business were bought up by Erard.

He set to work diplomatically to find his natural half-brother, Joseph Mirouët; but one evening Grimm told him that, after enlisting in a Prussian regiment, the artist had deserted, and, taking a false name, had escaped all search.

Joseph Mirouët, gifted by nature with an enchanting voice, a fine figure, and a handsome face, being a composer of taste and spirit into the bargain, led for fifteen years the Bohemian existence which Hoffmann of Berlin has so well described. But at the age of forty he was reduced to such misery that, in 1806, he seized the opportunity of becoming a Frenchman again. He then settled at Hamburg, where he married the daughter of a respectable citizen, who, being music-mad, fell in love with the singer whose fame was still in the future, and who devoted herself to its attainment. But after fifteen years of penury, Joseph Mirouët's head could not stand the wine of opulence; his extravagant nature reasserted itself; and though he made his wife happy, in a few years he had spent all her fortune. Misery again came upon them. The household must indeed have been living wretchedly for Joseph Mirouët to come down to enlisting as one of the band in a French regiment.

In 1813, by the merest chance, the surgeon-major of this

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regiment, struck by the name of Mirouët, wrote to Doctor Minoret, to whom he owed some obligation. The reply came at once. In 1814, before the capitulation of Paris, Joseph Mirouët had found a home there, and there his wife died in giving birth to a little girl, whom the doctor named Ursule, after his wife. The bandmaster did not long survive his wife; he, like her, was worn out by fatigue and privation. On his deathbed the hapless musician bequeathed his little girl to the doctor, who was her godfather, in spite of his repugnance for what he called Church mummeries.

After losing every child, either by miscarriage, at the time of its birth, or within the first year of its life, the doctor had anxiously looked forward to their last hope. But when a sickly, nervous, delicate woman begins with a miscarriage, it is common enough to see her successive failures, as in the case of Ursule Minoret, in spite of her husband's care, watchfulness, and learning. The poor man had often blamed himself for their persistent desire to have children. The last of the little ones born to them, after an interval of more than two years, died in 1792, the victim of constitutional nervousness, inherited from its mother, if we may believe the physiologists, who say that, in the inscrutable phenomena of generation, a child takes its blood from the father and its nervous system from the mother. The doctor, compelled to forego the joys of his strongest feelings, no doubt found in benevolence some indemnity for disappointed fatherhood.

All through his married life, so cruelly agitated, he had wished above everything for a little fair girl, one of those flowers which are the delight of a household; so he gladly accepted his half-brother's request, and transferred all his vanished hopes and dreams to the little orphan. For two years he watched over the minutest details of Ursule's life, as Cato over Pompey; he would not have her fed, or taken up, or put to bed without his superintendence. His experience and his science were all devoted to this child. After enduring all the pangs, the alternations of fear and hope, the anxieties and joys of a mother, he was so happy as to find

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vigorous vitality and a deeply sensitive nature in this child of the flaxen-haired German mother and the artistic Frenchman. The happy old man watched the growth of that yellow hair with the feelings of a mother—first pale down, then silk, then light, fine hair, so caressing to the touch of caressing fingers. He would kiss the tiny feet, the toes through whose fine skin the blood shows pink, making them look like rosebuds. He was crazy over the child.

When she tried to speak, or when she fixed her lovely, soft blue eyes on the objects about her, with the wondering look which would seem to be the dawning of ideas, and which she ended with a laugh, he would sit in front of her for whole hours, and he and Jordy would try to find out the reasons—which to many have seemed mere caprices—concealed under the smallest manifestations of that delightful phase of life when the child is at once flower and fruit, a bewildered intelligence, perpetual motion, and vehement desire. Little Ursule's beauty and sweetness made her so precious to the doctor that for her he would gladly have changed the laws of nature; he would sometimes tell his friend Jordy that he suffered from pain in his teeth when Ursule was cutting hers.

When old men love a child there is no limit to their passion; they adore it. For this tiny creature's sake they silence their pet manias, and recall every detail of their past life. Their experience, their forbearance, their patience, all the acquisitions of life—a treasure so painfully amassed—are poured out for this young life by which they grow young again, and they make up for motherliness by intelligence. Their wisdom, always on the alert, is as good as a mother's intuition; they remember the exquisite care which in a mother is divination, and infuse it into the exercise of a pitifulness whose strength is great, no doubt, in proportion to that excessive weakness. The slowness of their movements supplies the place of maternal gentleness. And then, in them, as in children, life is reduced to the simplest expression; if a mother is a slave from feeling, the negation of all passion and the absence of all self-interest allow the old man to sacrifice himself wholly. Hence it is not uncommon to see children and old men make great friends.

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The old officer, the old curé, and the old doctor, happy in Ursule's caresses and caprices, were never tired of answering her or playing with her. Her childish petulance, far from fretting them, was their delight; and they indulged all her desires, while making everything a subject of instruction. Thus the little girl grew up in the midst of old men, who smiled on her, and were to her like so many mothers, all equally attentive and watchful. Thanks to this learned education, Ursule's soul developed in a congenial sphere. This rare plant found the soil that suited it, inhaled the elements of its true life, and assimilated the food of its native sunshine.

"In what faith will you bring this child up?" asked the Abbé Chaperon of Minoret, when Ursule was six years old.

"In yours," replied the doctor.

He, an atheist after the pattern of Monsieur de Wolmar in the *Nouvelle Héloïse,* did not see that he had any right to deprive Ursule of the benefits offered by the Catholic faith.

The physician, just then sitting on a bench outside the window of the Chinese summer-house, felt his hand warmly pressed by that of the curé.

"Yes, Curé, whenever she asks me about God, I shall refer her to her friend 'Sapron,'" said he, mimicking Ursule's baby accent. "I wish to see whether religious feeling is innate. So far, therefore, I have done nothing either for or against the tendencies of this young soul; but I have already, in my heart, appointed you her spiritual director."

"It will be accounted to you by God, I trust!" said the curé, gently patting his hands together, and raising them to heaven, as though he were putting up a short mental prayer.

So, at the age of six, the little orphan came under the religious influence of the curé, as she had already under that of her old friend Jordy.

The captain, formerly a professor in one of the old military schools, and interested in grammar and the divergencies of European tongues, had studied the problem of an universal

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language. This learned man, patient as all old teachers are, made it his pleasure to teach Ursule to read and write, instructing her in French, and in so much arithmetic as it was needful that she should know. The doctor's extensive library allowed of a choice of books fit to be read by a child, and adapted to amuse as well as to instruct her. The soldier and the priest left her mind to develop naturally and easily, as the doctor left her body. Ursule learned in play. Religion included reflection.

Thus left to the Divine culture of a nature guided by these three judicious teachers into a realm of purity, Ursule tended towards feeling rather than duty, and took as her rule of life the voice of conscience rather than social law. In her, beauty of sentiment and action would always be spontaneous; her judgment would come in to confirm the impulse of her heart. She was fated to do right as a pleasure before doing it as an obligation. This tone is the peculiar result of a Christian education. These principles, quite unlike those to be inculcated in a man, are suited to a woman, the soul and conscience of the family, the latent elegance of home life, the queen, or little less, of the household.

They all three acted in the same manner with this child. Far from being startled by the audacity of childish innocence, they explained to Ursule the purpose of things and their known processes, without ever giving her an inaccurate impression. When in her questioning about a plant, a flower, or a star, she went directly to God, the professor and the doctor alike told her that only the curé could answer her. Neither of them intruded on the ground of the other. Her godfather took charge of her physical progress and the matters of daily life; her lessons were Jordy's affair; morality, metaphysics, and all higher matters were left to the curé.

This excellent education was not counteracted by bad servants, as is sometimes the case in wealthier houses. La Bougival, well lectured on the subject—and, indeed, far too simple in mind and nature to interfere—did nothing to mar the work of these great spirits.

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Thus Ursule, a privileged creature, had to nurture her three good genii, who found their task easy and pleasant with so sweet a nature as hers. This manly tenderness, this seriousness tempered by smiles, this freedom without risk, this incessant care of mind and body, had made her, at the age of nine, a delightful and lovely child. Then, unfortunately, the fatherly trio was broken up. In the following year the old captain died, leaving it to the doctor and the curé to carry on his work, after he had achieved the most difficult part of it. Flowers would spring up naturally in a soil so well prepared. The good gentleman had, during these nine years, saved a thousand francs a year, and left ten thousand francs to his little Ursule, that she might have something to remember him by all her life through. In his will, full of pathetic feeling, he begged his legatee to spend the four or five hundred francs a year of interest on this little capital exclusively on dress.

When the Justice placed seals on his old friend's possessions, he found, in a closet which no one had ever been allowed to enter, a quantity of toys, most of them broken, and all used; toys of the past, piously treasured, which Monsieur Bongrand himself was to burn, by the poor captain's desire.

Not long after this, Ursule was to take her first communion. The Abbé Chaperon devoted a whole year to instructing the young girl, in whom heart and brain, so early developed, but so wisely dependent on each other, required a specific spiritual nourishment. And this initiation into a knowledge of divine things was of such a nature that from this period, when the soul takes its religious mould, Ursule became a pious and mystical young creature, whose character was always superior to events, and whose heart could triumph over adversity. Then it was that a secret struggle began between infidel old age and fully-believing youth; a struggle of which she who had challenged it was long unaware, but of which the issue had set the town by the ears, while it was destined to have great influence on Ursule's future life, by unchaining again her the doctor's collateral relations.

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During the first six months of the year 1824 Ursule almost always spent the morning at the curé's house. The old doctor divined the Abbé's intention; he wanted to make Ursule herself an invincible argument. The unbeliever, beloved by his goddaughter as though she were his own child, would believe in her simplicity, and be attracted by the touching effects of religion in the soul of a girl whose love, like the trees of the tropical forest, was always loaded with flowers and fruit, always fresh, and always fragrant. A beautiful life is more powerful than the most cogent arguments. It is impossible to resist the charm of certain images, and the doctor's eyes filled with tears, he knew not why, when he saw the child of his heart set out for church dressed in a frock of white gauze, with white satin shoes, graced with white ribbons, a fillet of white round her head tied on one side with a large bow, her hair rippling in a thousand waves over her pretty white shoulders, her bodice trimmed with a pleating mixed with narrow bows, her eyes shining like stars, from new hopes, loving her godfather all the more since her soul had risen to God. When he perceived the idea of eternity supplying nourishment to the soul hitherto wrapped in the darkness of childhood, as the sun brings life to the world after the night is past, he felt vexed to remain alone at home, still without knowing why. Seated on the balcony steps, his eyes remained long fixed on the bars of the gate through which his godchild had passed, saying, "Why are you not coming too, godfather? Am I to be happy without you?"

Though shaken to the foundations, the encyclopedist's pride did not at once give way. However, he went out to look at the little procession, and saw his little Ursule radiant with exaltation under her veil. She flashed an inspired look at him, which struck to the stoniest corner of his heart, the spot closed against God. Still the deist was firm. "Mummery!" he said to himself. "To imagine that if a Maker of worlds exists, such an Organizer of infinitude can trouble Himself about this foolish trumpery!"

He laughed, and pursued his walk along the heights which

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overhang the road through the Gatinais, where the church bells, ringing loud peals, announced the gladness of many a home.

The clatter of backgammon is intolerable to those who do not know the game, one of the most difficult that exist. Not to disturb his little girl—whose extreme delicacy of ear and nerves did not allow of her enduring this rattle and their talk without apparent meaning—the curé, old Jordy during his lifetime, and Doctor Minoret postponed their game till the child was in bed or out walking. It often happened that it was unfinished when she came in again, and she then submitted with the best possible grace, and sat down by the window to sew. She disliked the game, which at the beginning is no doubt dry and dull, to many minds repellent, and so difficult to master, that those who have not become accustomed to it in their youth find it almost impossible to learn in later life.

Now on the evening after her first communion, when Ursule came back to her guardian and found him alone for that day, she set the backgammon board in front of the old man.

"Now, whose throw will it be?" said she.

"Ursule," said the doctor, "is it not sinful to make game of your godfather on the very day of your first communion?"

"I am not making game," said she, seating herself. "I must think of your pleasure—you who are always thinking of mine. Whenever Monsieur Chaperon was pleased with me, he gave me a lesson in backgammon, and he has given me so many that I am prepared to beat you. You will not have to put yourself to inconvenience for me. I have conquered every difficulty, not to interfere with your amusement, and I really like the rattle of the dice."

Ursule won the game. The curé came in, taking them by surprise, and enjoyed her triumph.

Next day Minoret, who had hitherto refused to allow the girl to learn music, went to Paris, bought a piano, and made arrangements with a mistress at Fontainebleau, submitting to the annoyance which Ursule's constant practising could

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not fail to cause him. One of his lost friend Jordy's phrenological prognostics proved true—the girl became an excellent musician. The doctor, proud of his goddaughter, now got an old German named Schmucke, a learned professor of music, to come from Paris once a week, and paid the cost of an art which he had at first contemned as perfectly useless in home-life. Unbelievers do not love music, that heavenly language worked out by Catholicism, which found the names of the seven notes in one of its hymns. Each note is called by the first syllable of the first seven lines of the hymn to Saint John.

The impression produced on the old man by Ursule's first communion, though vivid, was transient. The calm contentment which acts of resolution and prayer diffused in her young soul were also examples of which he took no account. Minoret, having no subjects for remorse or repentance, enjoyed perfect serenity of mind. Doing all his acts of benevolence without any hope of an eternal harvest, he thought himself superior to the Catholic, who, as he always said, was merely making a profitable bargain with God.

"And yet," the Abbé Chaperon would say, "if all men went in for this business, you must admit that society might be perfect. There would be no more misery. To be benevolent on your lines, a man must be a great philosopher. You raise yourself to your principles by reason—you are a social exception; now you need only be a Christian to be benevolent on ours. With you it is an effort; with us it is natural."

"Which is as much as to say, Curé, that I think and you feel. That is all."

Meanwhile, having reached the age of twelve, Ursule, whose womanly tact and shrewdness were brought into play by a superior education, and whose sense, now in its blossom, was enlightened by a religious spirit, fully understood that her godfather believed not in a future life, nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in Providence, nor in God. The doctor, pressed by her innocent questioning, found it impossible any longer to hide the terrible secret. Ursule's naïve

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consternation at first made him smile; but then, seeing that she was sometimes sad, he understood how great an affection this dejection revealed. Unqualified love has a horror of every kind of discord, even in things which have no connection with itself. The old man would sometimes lend himself, as to a caress, to the arguments of his adopted child, spoken in a gentle and tender voice, and the outcome of the most pure and ardent feeling. But believers and unbelievers speak two different languages, and cannot understand each other. The young girl in pleading the cause of God was hard upon her godfather, as a spoilt child is sometimes hard upon its mother. The curé gently reproved her, telling her that God reserved to Himself the power of humbling such proud spirits. The young girl answered the Abbé by saying that David slew Goliath. These religious differences, these sorrows of the child who longed to lead her guardian to God, were the only griefs of the home-life, so simple and so full, and hidden from the gaze of the inquisitive little town.

Ursule grew up and developed into the modest, Christianly-trained maiden whom Désiré had admired as she came out of church. The culture of the flowers in the garden, music, amusing her guardian, and all the attentions she paid him—for Ursule had relieved La Bougival by taking care of the old man—all filled up the hours, days, and months of this tranquil existence. For a year past, indeed, some little ailments of Ursule's had made the doctor anxious; but they did not disturb him beyond making him watchful of her health. Meanwhile, however, the sagacious observer and experienced practitioner fancied he could discern that to her physical disorders there was some corresponding disturbance in her mind. He watched her with a mother's eye, but seeing no one in their circle worthy to inspire her with love, he made himself easy.

Under these circumstances, just a month before the day when this drama had its beginning, an event occurred in the doctor's intellectual life—one of those incidents which plough

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into the subsoil, so to speak, of our convictions, and turn up its very depths. But it will first be necessary to give a brief account of some facts of his medical career, which will also lend fresh interest to this narrative.

At the end of the eighteenth century science was as deeply rent by the apparition of Mesmer as art was by that of Gluck. After his rediscovery of magnetism, Mesmer came to France, whither from time immemorial inventors have resorted to find protection for their discoveries. France, thanks to the lucidity of her language, is as it were the trumpeter of the world.

"If homœopathy gets to Paris, it is safe!" said Hahnemann.

"Go to France," said Metternich to Gall, "and if they laugh at your 'bumps,' you are a made man."

Mesmer, then, had his disciples and his antagonists, as ardent as the Piccinists against the Gluckists. Scientific France was stirred, and a serious debate was set on foot. Until judgment should be pronounced, the Faculty of Medicine, in a body, proscribed what they called Mesmer's quackery, his tub, his conducting wires, and his theories. But it must be said that the German compromised his splendid discovery by preposterous pecuniary demands. Mesmer failed through unproven facts, through his ignorance of the part played in nature by imponderable fluids not as yet investigated, and through his inability to study all sides of a science which has three aspects. Magnetism has more applications; in Mesmer's hands it was in relation to its future development what a principle is to results. But though the discoverer lacked genius, it is sad for human reason and for France to have to own that a science contemporaneous with the earliest civilization, cultivated in Egypt and Chaldea, in Greece and in India, met in Paris at the high tide of the eighteenth century with the same fate as the truth embodied in Galileo in the sixteenth; and that magnetism was put out of court by the twofold attainder of religious believers and of materialist philosophers, both equally alarmed. Magnetism,

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the favorite science of Jesus, and one of the powers conferred on the apostles, seems to have been as little recognized by the Church as by the followers of Jean-Jacques and Voltaire, of Locke and Condillac. Neither the Encyclopedia nor the priesthood could come to terms with this ancient human force which seemed to them so novel. The miracles of the *convulsionnaires* were smothered by the Church and by the indifference of the learned, in spite of the valuable works of Carré de Montgeron; still, they were the first summons to make experiments on the fluids in the human body which supply the power of calling up enough spontaneous forces to nullify the pain caused by an external agency. But it would have necessitated the recognition of fluids that are intangible, invisible, and imponderable, the three negations which science at that time regarded as the definition of a vacuum.

To modern science a vacuum is impossible. Given ten feet of vacuum, and the world is in ruins! To materialists especially the world is absolutely full, everything is closely linked and connected, and acts mechanically.

"The world," said Diderot, "as a result of mere chance is more intelligible than God. The multiplicity of causes, and the immeasurable number of throws that chance presupposes, sufficiently account for creation. Given the *Æneid* and all the letters necessary to set it up, if you grant me time and space, by dint of tossing the letters, I should bring out the combination forming the *Æneid.*" These wretched men, who would deify everything rather than confess a God, shrank no less from the infinite divisibility of matter which is implied in the nature of an imponderable force. Locke and Condillac at that time delayed by fifty years the immense advance which natural science is now making under the conception of unity which we owe to the great Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.

Some honest minds, devoid of system, convinced by the facts they had conscientiously studied, persisted in holding the doctrine of Mesmer, who discerned the existence in man

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of a penetrating influence, giving one individual power over another, and brought into play by the will; an influence which is curative when the fluid is abundant, and which acts as a duel between two wills—the evil to be cured, and the will to cure it. The phenomena of somnambulism, hardly suspected by Mesmer, were detected by MM. de Puységur and Deleuze; but the Revolution brought a pause in these discoveries, which left the men of learning and the scoffers in possession of the field.

Among the small number of believers were some physicians; these seceders were persecuted by their brethren till the day of their death. The respectable faculty of doctors in Paris turned against the Mesmerists with all the rigor of a religious warfare, and were as cruel in their hatred as it was possible to be in a period of Voltairean tolerance. The orthodox physicians refused to meet in consultation with those who adhered to the Mesmerian heresy. In 1820 these reputed heresiarchs were still the object of this unformulated proscription. The disasters and storms of the Revolution did not extinguish this scientific hostility. None but priests, lawyers, and physicians can hate in this way. The "gown" is always terrible. But are not ideas certain to be more implacable than things? Doctor Bouvard, a friend of Minoret's, accepted the new creed, and to his dying day persisted in the scientific faith to which he sacrificed the peace of his whole life—for he was the pet aversion of the Paris Faculty. Minoret, one of the bravest supporters of the encyclopedists, and the most redoubtable adversary of Deslon, Mesmer's chief disciple, since his pen had great weight in this dispute, quarreled beyond remedy with his old comrade; he did worse, he persecuted him. His behavior to Bouvard must have caused him the only repentance that can have clouded the serenity of his declining life.

Since Doctor Minoret's retirement to Nemours, the science of imponderable agents—the only name applicable to magnetism of which the phenomena ally it so closely with electricity and light—had made immense progress, in spite

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of the unfailing mockery of the Paris world of science. Phrenology and physiognomy, the sciences of Gall and Lavater, twins, of which one is to the other as cause to effect, demonstrated to the eyes of more than one physiologist certain traces of the intangible fluid which is the basis of the phenomena of human will, giving rise to passions and habits, to the forms of the features and of the skull. Magnetic facts too, the miracles of somnambulism, and those of divination and ecstasy, allowing us to enter into the world of spirit, were multiplying. The strange tale of the apparitions seen by Martin, a farmer, which were amply proved, and that peasant's interview with Louis XVIII.; the statements as to Swedenborg's intercourse with the dead, seriously accepted in Germany; Walter Scott's narratives of the results of second-sight; the amazing faculties displayed by some fortune-tellers, who combined into one science chiromancy, card-reading, and horoscopy; the facts of catalepsy, and of the peculiar action of the diaphragm under certain morbid influences; all these phenomena, curious, to say the least, and all emanating from the same source, undermined much doubt, and led the most indifferent into the province of experiment. Minoret knew nothing of this movement of minds, vast in Northern Europe, though still small in France, where, nevertheless, certain facts occurred which superficial observers called marvelous, but which fell like stones to the bottom of the sea in the whirlpool of events in Paris.

At the beginning of this year the anti-Mesmerist was greatly disturbed by receiving the following letter:—

"My old Comrade,—Every friendship, even a lost friendship, has rights which it is not easy to set aside. I know that you are still alive, and I remember less of our hostilities than of our happy days in the little dens of Saint-Julien-le-pauvre. Now that I am about to quit this world, I cling to a hope of proving to you that magnetism is destined to be one of the most important of sciences—unless, indeed, all science should not be regarded as *one*. I can wreck your in-

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credulity by positive proofs. Perhaps I may gain from your curiosity the happiness of once more clasping your hand as we used to clasp hands before the days of Mesmer.—Always yours, BOUVARD."

The anti-Mesmerist, stung as a lion by a gadfly, rushed off to Paris and left his card on old Bouvard, who lived in the Rue Férou, near Saint-Sulpice. Bouvard sent a card to his hotel, writing on it, "To-morrow, at nine o'clock, Rue St. Honoré, opposite the Church of the Assumption."

Minoret, grown young again, did not sleep. He went to call on the old physicians of his acquaintance, and asked them if the world were turned upside down, if there were still a School of Medicine, and if the four Faculties still existed. The doctors reassured him by telling him that the old spirit of resistance still survived; only, instead of persecuting the new science, the Academies of Medicine and of Sciences roared with laughter, and classed magnetic demonstrations with the tricks of Comus, Comte, and Bosco, as jugglery, sleight-of-hand, and what is known as amusing physics.

These speeches did not hinder Minoret from going to the rendezvous appointed by old Bouvard. After forty-four years of alienation the antagonists met again under a courtyard gate in the Rue St. Honoré.

Frenchmen live in too constant a change to hate each other very long. In Paris, especially, events expand space and make life so wide—in politics, in science, and in literature—that men cannot fail to find countries in it to conquer where their demands find room to dwell and rule. Hatred requires so many forces always in arms that those who mean to hate persistently begin with a good supply. And then, only bodies of men can bear it in mind. At the end of forty-four years Robespierre and Danton would fall on each other's neck.

Neither of the two doctors, however, offered to shake hands. Bouvard was the first to say to Minoret (with the familiar *tu* of French good-fellowship):

"You are looking very well."

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"Yes, not so badly; and you?" said Minoret, the ice being broken.

"I—as you see me."

"Has magnetism kept you from dying?" asked Minoret in a bantering tone, but not bitterly.

"No; but it has almost kept me from living."

"You are not rich then?" said Minoret.

"Rich!" said Bouvard.

"Well, but I am rich!" cried Minoret.

"It is not your fortune, but your conviction, that I aim at. —Come," replied Bouvard.

"Obstinate fellow!" exclaimed Minoret.

The believer in Mesmer led his incredulous friend into a dark stairway, and made him mount cautiously to the fourth floor.

At this time there was in Paris an extraordinary man, endowed by faith with tremendous powers, and a master of magnetic forces in every form of their application. Not only did this Great Unknown, who is still living, cure unaided, and at any distance, the most painful and inveterate diseases—cure them suddenly and radically, as of old did the Redeemer of man—but he also could produce at any moment the most curious phenomena of somnambulism by quelling the most refractory wills. The countenance of the Unknown, who, like Swedenborg, declares himself to be commissioned by God and in communion with the angels, is that of a lion; it is radiant with concentrated and irresistible energy. His features, of a singular cast, have a terrible and overwhelming power; his voice, coming from the depths of his being, seems charged with magnetic fluid, and enters the listener by every pore.

Disgusted with the ingratitude of the public after thousands of cures, he had thrown himself into unapproachable solitude, voluntary annihilation. His all-powerful hand, which has restored dying daughters to their mothers, fathers to their weeping children, adored mistresses to lovers crazed with love; which has cured the sick when physicians have

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given them over, and caused thanksgivings to be sung in the synagogue, in the conventicle, and in the church, by priests of different creeds, all brought to the same God by the same miracle; which has mitigated the agony of death to those for whom life was no longer possible—that sovereign hand, the sun of life which dazzled the closed eyes of the sleep-walker, he now would not lift to restore the heir of a kingdom to a queen. Wrapped in the memory of the good he has done as in a luminous shroud he has shut his door on the world, and dwells in the skies.

But, in the early days of his reign, almost startled by his own powers, this man, whose disinterestedness was as great as his influence, allowed a few inquirers to witness his miracles. The rumor of his fame, which had been immense, and which might revive any day, aroused Doctor Bouvard on the brink of the tomb. The persecuted believer in Mesmer could at last behold the most brilliant manifestation of the science he cherished, like a treasure, in his heart. The old man's misfortunes had touched the Great Unknown, who granted him certain privileges. So Bouvard, as they climbed the stairs, took his old adversary's banter with malicious satisfaction. He made no reply but "You will see, you will see," with the little tosses of the head that mark a man sure of his case.

The two doctors entered a suite of rooms of the plainest simplicity. Bouvard went to speak with the master for a moment in a bedroom adjoining the drawing-room, where he left Minoret, whose distrust was now aroused. But Bouvard immediately came back, and led him into the bedroom, where he found the famous Swedenborgian with a woman seated in an armchair. The woman did not rise, and seemed not to observe the arrival of the two old men.

"What, no tub?" said Minoret, with a smile.

"Nothing but the power of God," gravely replied the Swedenborgian, whom Minoret supposed to be a man of about fifty.

The three men sat down, and the stranger made conversa-

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tion. They spoke of the weather and indifferent matters, to old Minoret's great surprise; he fancied he was being fooled. The Swedenborgian questioned his visitor as to his scientific views, and was evidently taking time to study him.

"You have come here out of pure curiosity, monsieur," he said at length. "I am not in the habit of prostituting a power which, it is my full conviction, emanates from God; if I made a frivolous or evil use of it, it might be taken from me. However, Monsieur Bouvard tells me our aim is to be the conversion of an opinion antagonistic to ours, and the enlightenment of a man of learning and good faith. I shall therefore satisfy you. The woman you see there," he went on, pointing to the armchair, "is in a magnetic sleep. From the accounts and revelations of such somnambulists, the state is one of great beatitude, during which the inner being, set free from the fetters by which visible nature hinders the full exercise of its faculties, wanders through the world which we erroneously call invisible. Sight and hearing are then far more perfectly active than in the state which we call being awake, and independent, perhaps, of the medium of those organs which are but as a sheath to the blades of light that we call sight and hearing. To a man in that condition distance and material obstacles have ceased to exist, or are pierced through by an internal vitality of which our body is the container, the necessary fulcrum, a mere wrapper. Terms are lacking for results so recently rediscovered; for the words imponderable, intangible, invisible, have no meaning in relation to the fluid whose action is perceptible through magnetism. Light is ponderable by heat, which, when it penetrates a body, increases its volume; and electricity is only too tangible. We have passed judgment on things instead of blaming the imperfection of our instruments."

"She is asleep?" asked Minoret, examining the woman, who seemed to him of the lower class.

"Her body is in a certain sense annihilated," replied the Swedenborgian. "Ignorant persons mistake this state for sleep. But she will prove to you that there is a spiritual

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world, where the spirit does not obey the laws of the physical universe. I will send her to any region whither you may choose that she shall go, twenty leagues away, or as far as China; she will tell you what is happening there."

"Send her only to my house at Nemours," replied Minoret.

"I will not interfere between you," said the mysterious man. "Give me your hand; you shall be at once actor and spectator, cause and effect."

He took Minoret's hand, Minoret yielding; he held it for a minute with an apparent concentration of thought, and with his other hand he took that of the woman in the chair; then he placed the doctor's hand in the woman's, signing to the old sceptic to sit down by the side of this Pythoness without a tripod. Minoret observed a slight thrill in the excessively calm face of the woman when the Swedenborgian placed them in contact; but the movement, though marvelous in its results, was in itself extremely simple.

"Obey this gentleman," said the Unknown, extending his hand over the head of the woman, who seemed to inhale light and life from him. "And remember that all you do for him will please me.—Now, you can speak to her," he said to Minoret.

"Go to Nemours, Rue des Bourgeois, to my house," said the doctor.

"Give her time; hold her hand till she shows by what she says that she is there," said Bouvard to his old friend.

"I see a river," replied the woman in a low voice, and seeming to be looking attentively within herself, in spite of her closed eyes. "I see a pretty garden."

"Why have you begun by the river and the garden?" asked Minoret.

"Because they are in the garden."

"Who?"

"The young lady and her nurse, of whom you are thinking."

"What is the garden like?" asked Minoret.

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"As you go into it by the steps that lead to the river there is a long gallery to the right, built of brick, in which I see books, and at the end there is a little gazebo trimmed up with wooden bells and red eggs. The wall on the left is covered with creepers—Virginia creeper and yellow jasmine. There is a little sundial in the middle; there are a great many pots of flowers. Your ward is looking at the flowers and showing them to her nurse; she makes holes with a dibble and sows some seeds. The nurse is raking the path. Though the girl is as pure as an angel, there is a dawning of love in her, as faint as the first light of morning."

"For whom?" asked the doctor, who had so far heard nothing that any one might not have told him without being clairvoyant. He still believed it was a trick.

"You know nothing of it, though you were somewhat anxious not long since as she grew up," said the woman, smiling. "The instincts of her heart followed the development of her nature."

"And it is quite a common woman who speaks thus?" exclaimed the old doctor.

"In this state they all speak with peculiar lucidity," replied Bouvard.

"But who is it that Ursule loves?"

"Ursule does not know that she is in love," answered the woman, with a little shake of her head. "She is too angelically innocent to be conscious of desire, or of love in any kind; but she wonders over him, she thinks of him; she even forbids herself to do so, and returns in spite of her determination to avoid it.—Now she is at the piano——"

"But who is he?"

"The son of the lady who lives opposite."

"Madame de Portenduère?"

"Portenduère, did you say?" replied the clairvoyant. "I daresay. But there is no danger; he is not at home."

"Have they ever spoken to each other?"

"Never. They have looked at each other. She thinks him charming. And he really is very good-looking, and he has

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a good heart. She has watched him out of her window, and they have seen each other at church; but the young man thinks no more about it."

"What is his name?"

"I cannot tell you unless I should read it or hear it.—— His name is Savinien; she has just spoken it; she likes the sound of it; she had looked in the calendar for his saint's day, and had marked it with a tiny red spot. Childish! Oh, she will love very truly, and with a love as pure as it is strong. She is not the girl to love twice; love will color her whole soul, and fill it so completely, that she will reject every other feeling."

"Where do you see that?"

"I see it in her. She will know how to bear suffering; she has inherited that power, for her father and mother suffered much."

The last words overset the doctor, who was surprised rather than shaken. It is desirable to note that ten or fifteen minutes passed between each of the woman's statements; during these her attention became more and more self-centered. He could see that she saw! Her brow showed peculiar changes; internal effort was to be seen there; it cleared or was knit by a power whose effects Minoret had never seen but in dying people at the moment when the prophetic spirit is upon them. She not unfrequently made gestures reminding him of Ursule.

"Oh, question her," said the mysterious master to Minoret. "She will tell you secrets that none but yourself can know."

"Does Ursule love me?" said Minoret.

"Almost as she loves God," replied the sleeper, with a smile. "And she is very unhappy about your infidelity. You do not believe in God, as if you could hinder His being! His voice fills the world! And so you are the cause of the poor child's only distress.—There! she is playing her scales; she wishes to be a better musician than she is, and is vexed with herself. What she thinks is: 'If I only could sing well, if I had a fine voice, when he was at his mother's it would be sure to reach his ears!'"

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Doctor Minoret took out a notebook and wrote out the exact hour.

"Can you tell me what seeds she has sown?"

"Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——"

"And lastly?"

"Larkspur."

"Where is my money?"

"At your lawyer's; but you invest as it comes in without losing a day's interest."

"Yes; but where is the money I keep at home for the half-yearly housekeeping?"

"You keep it in a large book bound in red, called 'The Pandects of Justinian,' vol. ii., between the two last pages; the book is above the sideboard with glass doors, in the division for folios. There is a whole row of them. The money is in the last volume at the end next the drawing-room.—By the way, vol. iii. is placed before vol. ii. But it is not money—it is in——"

"Thousand franc notes?" asked the doctor.

"I cannot see clearly; they are folded up.—No, there are two notes for five hundred francs each."

"You can see them?"

"Yes."

"What are they like?"

"One is old, and very yellow; the other is white, and almost new."

This last part of the interview left Doctor Minoret thunderstruck. He looked at Bouvard in blank amazement; but Bouvard and the Swedenborgian, who were accustomed to the astonishment of sceptics, were conversing in an undertone, without showing any surprise or amazement.

Minoret begged them to allow him to return after dinner. The anti-Mesmerist wanted to think it over, to shake off his extreme terror, so as to test once more this immense power, to submit it to some decisive experiment, and ask some questions which, if answered, could leave no shadow of a doubt.

"Be here by nine o'clock," said the Unknown. "I shall be at your service."

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Minoret was so violently agitated that he went away without taking leave, followed by Bouvard, who called after him:

"Well? Well?"

"I believe I am mad," replied Minoret, as they reached the outer door. "If that woman has told the truth about Ursule, as there is no one on earth but Ursule who can know what the sorceress has revealed—*you are right.* I only wish I had wings to fly to Nemours and verify her statements. But I will hire a post-chaise and start at ten this evening. Oh! I am going crazy!"

"What would you think, then, if you had known a man incurable for years made perfectly well in five seconds; if you could see that great magnetizer make a leper sweat profusely; or make a crippled woman walk?"

"Let us dine together, Bouvard, and stay with me till nine o'clock. I want to devise some decisive and irrefutable test."

"Certainly, old friend," replied the Mesmerian doctor.

The reconciled enemies went to dine at the Palais Royal. After an eager conversation, which helped Minoret to escape from the turmoil of ideas that racked his brain, Bouvard said to him:

"If you discern in this woman a real power to annihilate space, if you can but convince yourself that she, here, from the Church of the Assumption, can see and hear what is going on at Nemours, you must then admit all other effects of magnetism; they are to a sceptic quite as impossible as these. Ask her, therefore, one single proof that may satisfy you, for you may imagine that we have procured all this information. But we cannot possibly know, for instance, what will happen this evening at nine o'clock in your house, in your ward's bedroom. Remember or write down exactly what the clairvoyant may tell you, and hasten home. Little Ursule, whom I never saw, is not our accomplice; and if she shall have done or said what you will have written down, bow thy head, proud Infidel!"

The two friends returned to the Swedenborgian's rooms.

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and there found the woman, who did not recognize Doctor Minoret. Her eyes gently closed under the hand which the master stretched out to her from afar, and she sank into the attitude in which Minoret had seen her before dinner. When his hand and hers were placed in connection he desired her to tell him all that was happening in his house at Nemours at that moment.

"What is Ursule doing?" he asked.

"She is in her dressing-gown; she has finished putting in her curl-papers; she is kneeling on her prie-Dieu in front of an ivory crucifix fastened on to a panel of red velvet."

"What is she saying?"

"Her evening prayers; she commends herself to God; she beseeches Him to keep her soul free from evil thoughts; she examines her conscience, going over all she has done during the day to see whether she has failed in obedience to His commandments or those of the Church; she is stripping her heart bare, poor dear little thing." There were tears in the clairvoyant's eyes. "She has committed no sin; but she blames herself for having thought too much of Monsieur Savinien," she went on. "She stops to wonder what he is doing in Paris, and prays to God to make him happy. She ends with you, and says a prayer aloud."

"Can you repeat it?"

"Yes."

Minoret took out his pencil and wrote at the woman's dictation the following prayer, evidently composed by the Abbé Chaperon:

"O God, if Thou art pleased with Thy handmaid, who adores Thee and beseeches Thee with all love and fervor, who strives not to wander from Thy holy commandments, who would gladly die, as Thy Son died, to glorify Thy Name, who would fain live under Thy shadow, Thou to whom all hearts are open, grant me the mercy that my godfather's eyes may be unsealed, lead him into the way of life, and give him Thy grace, that he may dwell in Thee during his latter days; preserve him from all ill, and let me suffer in his stead! Holy

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Saint Ursule, my beloved patron Saint, and Thou, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Archangels, and Saints in Paradise, hear me; join your intercessions to mine, and have pity on us!"

The clairvoyant so exactly imitated the child's innocent gestures and saintly aspirations that Doctor Minoret's eyes filled with tears.

"Does she say anything more?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Repeat it."

"'Dear godfather! Whom will he play backgammon with in Paris?'—She has blown out her light, lays down her head, and goes to sleep.—She is gone off! She looks so pretty in her little nightcap!"

Minoret took leave of the Great Unknown, shook hands with Bouvard, ran downstairs, and hurried off to a stand of coaches, which at that time existed under the gateway of a mansion since demolished to make way for the Rue d'Alger. He there found a driver, and asked him if he would set out forthwith for Fontainebleau. The price having been agreed on, the old man, made young again, set out that very minute. As agreed, he let the horse rest at Essonne, then drove on till they picked up the Nemours diligence, and dismissed his coachman.

He reached home by about five in the morning, and went to bed amid the wreck of all his former notions of physiology, of nature, and of metaphysics; and he slept till nine, he was so tired by his expedition.

On waking, the doctor, quite sure that no one had crossed the threshold since his return, proceeded to verify the facts, not without an invincible dread. He himself had forgotten the difference between the two banknotes, and the displacement of the two volumes of the Pandects. The somnambulist had seen rightly. He rang for La Bougival.

"Tell Ursule to come to speak to me," said he, sitting down in the middle of the library.

The girl came at once, flew to his side, and kissed him;

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the doctor took her on his knee, where, as she sat, her fine fair tresses mingled with her old friend's white hair.

"You have something to say to me, godfather?"

"Yes. But promise me, on your soul, to reply frankly, unequivocally, to my questions."

Ursule blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Oh! I will ask you nothing that you cannot answer," he went on, seeing the bashfulness of first love clouding the hitherto childlike clearness of her lovely eyes.

"Speak, godfather."

"With what thought did you end your evening prayers last night; and at what hour did you say them?"

"It was a quarter-past nine, or half-past."

"Well, repeat now your last prayer."

The young girl hoped that her voice might communicate her faith to the unbeliever; she rose, knelt down, and clasped her hands fervently; a radiant look beamed in her face, she glanced at the old man, and said:

"What I asked God last night I prayed for again this morning, and shall still ask till He grants it me."

Then she repeated the prayer with fresh and emphatic expression; but, to her great surprise, her godfather interrupted her, ending it himself.

"Well, Ursule," said the doctor, drawing her on to his knees again, "and as you went to sleep with your head on the pillow, did you not say, 'Dear godfather! Whom will be play backgammon with in Paris?' "

Ursule started to her feet as though the trump of Judgment had sounded in her ears; she gave a cry of terror; her dilated eyes stared at the old man with fixed horror.

"Who are you, godfather? Where did you get such a power?" she asked, fancying that as he did not believe in God, he must have made a compact with the angel of hell.

"What did you sow in the garden yesterday?"

"Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——"

"And larkspurs to end with?"

She fell on her knees.

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"Do not terrify me, godfather!—But you were here, were you not?"

"Am I not always with you," replied the doctor in jest, to spare the innocent child's reason.

"Let us go to your room." Then he gave her his arm and went upstairs.

"Your knees are quaking, dear friend," said she.

"Yes; I feel quite overset."

"Do you at last believe in God?" she exclaimed, with innocent gladness, though the tears rose to her eyes.

The old man looked round the neat and simple room he had arranged for Ursule. On the floor was an inexpensive green drugget, which she kept exquisitely clean; on the walls a paper with a pale-gray ground and a pattern of roses with their green leaves; there were white cotton curtains, with a pink border, to the windows looking on the courtyard; between the windows, below a tall mirror, a console of gilt wood with a marble slab, on which stood a blue Sèvres vase for flowers; and opposite the fireplace, a pretty inlaid chest of drawers with a top of fine marble. The bed, furnished with old chintz, and chintz curtains lined with pink, was one of the old *duchesse* four-post beds which were common in the eighteenth century, ornamented with a capital of carved feathers to each of the fluted columns at the corners. On the chimney-shelf was an old clock, mounted in a sort of catafalque of tortoise-shell inlaid with ivory; the marble chimney-piece and candelabra, the glass, and the pier, painted in shades of gray, had a remarkably good effect of tone, color, and style. A large wardrobe, the doors inlaid with landscapes in various kinds of wood, some of them of greenish tint, hardly to be met with in these days, no doubt contained her linen and her dresses.

The atmosphere of this room had a fragrance as of heaven. The careful arrangement of everything indicated a spirit of order, a feeling for the harmony of things, that would have struck any one, even a Minoret-Levrault. It was, above all, easy to see how dear to Ursule were the things about

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her, and how fond she was of the room which was, so to speak, part of all her life as a child and a young girl.

While looking round at it all as an excuse, the guardian convinced himself that from her window Ursule could see across to Madame de Portenduère's house. During the night he had considered the line of conduct to be taken with regard to the secret he had discovered of her budding passion. To question his ward would compromise him in her eyes; for either he must approve or disapprove of her love; in either case he would be awkwardly situated. He had therefore determined that he would study for himself the relations of young Portenduère and Ursule, to decide whether he should try to counteract her inclination before it had become irresistible. Only an old man could show so much prudence. Still gasping under the shock of finding the magnetic revelations true, he turned about, examining the smallest things in the room, for he wished to glance at the almanac which hung by a corner of the chimney-piece.

"These clumsy candlesticks are too heavy for your pretty little hands," he said, taking up the marble candlesticks, ornamented with brass.

He weighed them in his hands, looked at the almanac, unhooked it, and said:

"This, too, seems to me very ugly. Why do you hang this common calendar in such a pretty room?"

"Oh, leave me that, godfather!"

"No, no; you shall have another to-morrow."

He went downstairs again, carrying away the convicting document, shut himself into his room, looked for Saint Savinien, and found, as the clairvoyant had said, a small red dot on the 19th of October; he found such another at Saint Denis' day, his own patron Saint; and at Saint John's day —that of the curé. And this dot, as large as a pin's head, the sleeping woman had discerned in spite of distance and obstacles. The old man meditated till dusk on all these facts, more stupendous to him than to any other man. He was forced to yield to evidence. A thick wall, within himself, as

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it were, crumbled down; for he had lived on the double foundation of his indifference to religion and his denial of magnetism. By proving that the senses—a purely physical structure, mere organs whose effects can all be explained—were conterminous with some of the attributes of infinity, magnetism overthrew, or at any rate seemed to him to overthrow, Spinoza's powerful logic. The Finite and the Infinite, two elements which, according to that great man, are incompatible, existed one in the other. However great the power he could conceive of the divisibility and mobility of matter, he could not credit it with almost divine characters. And he was too old to connect these phenomena with a system, to compare them with those of sleep, of vision, or of light. All his scientific theory, based on the statements of the school of Locke and Condillac, lay in ruins. On seeing his hollow idols wrecked, his incredulity naturally was shaken. Hence all the advantages in this struggle between Catholic youth and Voltairean old age was certain to be on Ursule's side. A beam of light fell on the dismantled fortress in ruins; from the depths of the wreckage rose the cry of prayer.

And yet, the stiff-necked old man tried to dispute his own doubts. Though stricken to the heart, he could not make up his mind; he still strove with God. At the same time his mind seemed to vacillate; he was not the same man. He became unnaturally pensive; he reads the *Pensées* of Pascal, Bossuet's sublime *Histoire des Variations;* he studied Bonald; he read Saint-Augustine; he also read through the works of Swedenborg and of the deceased Saint-Martin, of whom the mysterious stranger had spoken. The structure raised in this man by materialism was splitting on all sides; a shock alone was needed; and when his heart was ripe for God, it fell into the heavenly vineyard as fruits drop. Several times already in the evening, when playing his game with the priest, his goddaughter sitting by, he had asked questions which, in view of his opinions, struck the Abbé Chaperon as strange; for as yet he knew not of the moral travail by which God was rectifying this noble conscience.

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"Do you believe in apparitions?" the infidel suddenly asked his pastor, pausing in his game.

"Cardan, a great philosopher of the sixteenth century, said that he had seen some," replied the curé.

"I know of all those that the philosophers have seen; I have just re-read Plotinus. A this moment I ask you as a Catholic: I want to know whether you think that a dead man can return to visit the living?"

"Well, Jesus appeared to His apostles after His death," replied the priest. "The Church must believe in the apparitions of our Lord. As to miracles, there is no lack of them," added the Abbé Chaperon with a smile. "Would you like to hear of the latest? Some were wrought in the eighteenth century."

"Pooh!"

"Yes; the blessed Maria-Alphonzo de Liguori knew of the Pope's death when he was far from Rome, at the moment when the holy Father expired, and there were many witnesses to the miracle. The reverend bishop, in a trance, heard the Pontiff's last words, and repeated them to several persons. The messenger bringing the news did not arrive till thirty hours later——"

"Jesuit!" said Minoret with a smile; "I do not ask you for proofs; I ask you whether you believe it."

"I believe that the apparition depends greatly on the person seeing it," said the curé, still laughing at the sceptic.

"My dear friend, I am not laying a trap for you. What is your belief on this point?"

"I believe that the power of God is infinite," replied the Abbé.

"When I die, if I am at peace with God, I will entreat Him to let me appear to you," said the doctor, laughing.

"That is precisely the agreement made by Cardan with his friend," replied the curé.

"Ursule," said Minoret, "if ever a danger should threaten you, call me—I would come."

"You have just put into simple words the touching elegy

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called *Néère,* by André Chénier," replied the curé. "But poets are great only because they know how to embody facts or feelings in perennially living forms."

"Why do you talk of dying, my dear godfather?" said the young girl sadly. "We shall not die, we who are Christians; the grave is but the cradle of the soul."

"Well, well," said the doctor with a smile, "we are bound to quit this world, and when I am no more, you will be very much astonished at your fortune."

"When you are no more, my kind friend, my only consolation will be to devote my life to you."

"To me—when I am dead?"

"Yes. All the good works I may be able to do shall be done in your name to redeem your errors. I will pray to God day by day to persuade His infinite mercy not to punish eternally the faults of a day, but to give a place near to Himself among the spirits of the blest to a soul so noble and so pure as yours."

This reply, spoken with angelic candor and in a tone of absolute conviction, confounded error, and converted Denis Minoret like another Saint Paul. A flash of internal light stunned him, and at the same time this tenderness, extending even to the life to come, brought tears to his eyes. This sudden effect of grace was almost electrical. The curé clasped his hands and stood up in his agitation. The child herself, surprised at her success, shed tears. The old man drew himself up as though some one had called him, looked into space as if he saw an aurora; then he knelt on his armchair, folded his hands, and cast down his eyes in deep humiliation.

"Great God!" he said, in a broken voice, and looking up to heaven, "if any one can obtain my forgiveness, and lead me to Thee, is it not this spotless creature? Pardon my repentant old age, presented to Thee by this glorious child!"

He lifted up his soul in silence to God, beseeching Him to enlighten him by knowledge after having overwhelmed him by grace; then, turning to the curé, he held out his hand, saying:

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"My dear father in God, I am a little child again. I am yours; I give my soul into your hands."

Ursule kissed her godfather's hands, covering them with tears of joy. The old man took her on his knee, gaily calling her his godmother. The curé, much moved, recited the *Veni Creator* in a sort of religious transport. This hymn was their evening prayer as the three Christians knelt together.

"What has happened?" asked La Bougival in astonishment.

"At last my godfather believes in God!" cried Ursule.

"And a good thing too; that was all that was wanting to make him perfect!" exclaimed the old peasant woman, crossing herself with simple gravity.

"My dear Doctor," said the good priest, "you will soon have mastered the grandeur of religion and the necessity for its exercises; and you will find its philosophy, in so far as it is human, much loftier than that of the most daring minds."

The curé, who displayed an almost childlike joy, then agreed to instruct the old man by meeting him as a catechumen twice a week.

Thus the conversion ascribed to Ursule and to a spirit of sordid self-interest had been spontaneous. The priest, who for fourteen years had restrained himself from touching the wounds in that heart, though he had deeply deplored them, had been appealed to, as we go to a surgeon when we feel an injury. Since that scene every evening Ursule's prayers had become family prayers. Every moment the old man had felt peace growing upon him in the place of agitation. And viewing God as the responsible editor of inexplicable facts—as he put it—his mind was quite easy. His darling child told him that by this it could be seen that he was making progress in the kingdom of God.

To-day, during the service, he had just read the prayers with the exercise of his understanding; for, in his first talk with the curé, he had risen to the divine idea of the communion of the faithful. The venerable neophyte had understood the eternal symbol connected with that nourishment,

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which faith makes necessary as soon as the whole, deep, glorious meaning of the symbol is thoroughly felt. If he had seemed in a hurry to get home, it was to thank his dear little goddaughter for having brought him to the Lord, to use the fine old-fashioned phrase. And so he had her on his knee in his drawing-room, and was kissing her solemnly on the brow, at the very moment when his heirs, defiling her holy influence by their ignoble alarms, were lavishing on Ursule the coarsest abuse. The good man's haste to be at home, his scorn, as they thought it, for his relations, his sharp replies as he left the church, were all naturally attributed by each of the family to the hatred for them which Ursule had implanted in him.

While the girl was playing to her godfather the variations on *La dernière Pensée musicale* of Weber, a plot was being hatched in Minoret-Levrault's dining-room, which was destined to bring on to the stage one of the most important actors in this drama. The breakfast, which lasted two hours, was as noisy as a provincial breakfast always is, and washed down by capital wine brought to Nemours by canal, either from Burgundy or from Touraine. Zélie had procured some shell-fish too, some sea-fish, and a few rarer dainties to do honor to Désiré's return.

The dining-room, in its midst the round table of tempting aspect, looked like an inn-room. Zélie, satisfied with the extent of her household offices, had built a large room between the vast courtyard and the kitchen-garden, which was full of vegetables and fruit-trees. Here everything was merely neat and substantial. The example set by Levrault-Levrault had been a terror to the countryside, and Zélie had forbidden the master-builder's dragging her into any such folly. The room was hung with satin paper, and furnished with plain walnut-wood chairs and sideboards, with an earthenware stove, a clock on the wall, and a barometer. Though the crockery was ordinary—plain white china—the table shone with linen and abundant plate.

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As soon as the coffee had been served by Zélie, who hopped to and fro like a grain of shot in a bottle of champagne, for she kept but one cook; and when Désiré, the budding lawyer, had been fully apprised of the great event of the morning and its results, Zélie shut the door, and the notary Dionis was called upon to speak. The silence that fell, the looks fixed by each expectant heir on that authoritative face, plainly showed how great is the influence exercised by these men over whole families.

"My dear children," he began, "your uncle, having been born in 1746, is at this day eighty-three years old; now old men are liable to fits of folly, and this little——"

"Viper!" exclaimed Madame Massin.

"Wretch!" said Zélie.

"We will only call her by her name," said Dionis.

"Well, then, a thief," said Madame Crémière.

"A very pretty thief," added Désiré Minoret.

"This little Ursule," Dionis went on, "is very dear to him. I have not waited till this morning to make inquiries in the interest of you all as my clients, and this is what I have learned concerning this young——"

"Spoiler!" put in the tax-collector.

"Underhand fortune-hunter," said the lawyer's clerk.

"Hush, my friends, or I shall put on my hat and go, and good-day to you."

"Come, come, old man!" said Minoret, pouring him out a liqueur glassful of rum. "Drink that; it comes from Rome, direct."

"Ursule is no doubt Joseph Mirouët's legitimate offspring. But her father was the natural son of Valentin Mirouët, your uncle's father-in-law. Thus Ursule is the natural niece of Doctor Denis Minoret. As his natural niece, any will the doctor may make in her favor may perhaps be void, and if he should leave her his fortune, you may bring a lawsuit against her; this might be bad enough for you, for it is impossible to say that there is no tie of relationship between the doctor and Ursule; still, a lawsuit would certainly frighten a defenceless girl, and would result in a compromise."

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"The law is so rigorous as to the rights of natural children," said the newly-hatched lawyer, eager to display his learning, "that by the terms of a judgment of the Court of Appeal of July 7, 1817, a natural child can claim nothing from its natural grandfather, not even maintenance. So, you see, that the parentage of a natural child carries back. The law is against a natural child, even in his legitimate descendants; for it regards any legacies benefiting the grandchildren as bestowed through the personal intermediary of the natural son, their parent. This is the inference from a comparison of Articles 757, 908, and 911 of the Civil Code. And, in fact, the Royal Court of Paris, on the 26th of December, only last year, reduced a legacy bequeathed to the legitimate child of a natural son by its grandfather, who, as its grandfather, was as much a stranger in blood to his natural grandson as the doctor is to Ursule as her uncle."

"All that," said Goupil, "seems to me to relate only to the question of bequests made by grandparents to their illegitimate descendants; it has nothing to do with uncles, who do not appear to me to have any blood relationships to the legitimate offspring of these natural half-brothers. Ursule is a stranger in blood to Doctor Minoret. I remember a judgment delivered at the Supreme Court at Colmar in 1825, when I was finishing my studies, by which it was pronounced that the illegitimate child being dead, his descendants could no longer be liable to his interposition. Now, Ursule's father is dead."

Goupil's argument produced, what in reports of law-cases journalists are accustomed to designate by this parenthesis: (*Great sensation*).

"What does that matter?" cried Dionis. "Even if the case of a legacy left by the uncle of an illegitimate child has never yet come before the courts, if it should occur, the rigor of the French law towards natural children will be all the more surely applied, because we live in times when religion is respected. And I will answer for it that, in such a suit, a compromise would be offered; especially if it were known

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that you were resolved to carry the case against Ursule even to the Court of Final Appeal."

The delight of heirs who might find piles of gold betrayed itself in smiles, little jumps, and gestures all round the table. No one observed Goupil's shake of dissent. But, then, this exultation was immediately followed by deep silence and dismay at the notary's next word:

"But——"

Dionis at once saw every eye fixed on him, every face assuming the same angle, just as if he had pulled the wire of one of those toy theatres where all the figures move in jerks by the action of wheel-work.

"But there is no law to hinder your uncle from adopting or marrying Ursule," he went on. "As to an adoption, it might be disputed, and you would, I believe, win the case; the High Courts are not to be trifled with in the matter of adoption, and you would be examined in the preliminary inquiry. It is all very well for the doctor to display the ribbon of Saint-Michael, to be an officer of the Legion of Honor, and formerly physician to the ex-emperor; he would go to the wall. But though you might be warned in case of an adoption, how are you to know if he marries her? The old fellow is quite sharp enough to get married in Paris after residing there for a year, and to secure to his bride a settlement of a million francs under the marriage contract. The only thing, therefore, which really jeopardizes your inheritance is that your uncle should marry the child." Here the notary paused.

"There is another risk," said Goupil, with a knowing air. "He may make a will in favor of a third person, old Bongrand for instance, who would be constituted trustee for Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët."

"If you worry your uncle," Dionis began again, cutting short his head-clerk, "if you are not all as nice as possible to Ursule, you will drive him either into a marriage or into the trusteeship of which Goupil speaks; but I do not think he is likely to have recourse to a trust; it is a dangerous alter-

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native. As to his marrying her, it is easy to prevent it. Désiré has only to show the girl a little attention; she will certainly prefer a charming young fellow, the cock of the walk at Nemours, to an old man."

"Mother," said the postmaster's son in Zélie's ear, tempted both by the money and by Ursule's beauty, "if I were to marry her we should get it all."

"Are you mad? You who will have fifty thousand francs a year one of those days, and who are sure to be elected deputy! So long as I live you shall never hang a millstone round your neck by a foolish marriage. Seven hundred thousand francs? Thank you for nothing! Why, monsieur, the Mayor's only daughter will have fifty thousand a year, and they have already made overtures."

This reply, in which, for the first time in his life, his mother spoke roughly to him, extinguished in Désiré every hope of marrying the fair Ursule, for his father and he could never gain the day against the determination written in Zélie's terrible blue eyes.

"Yes; but, I say, Monsieur Dionis," cried Crémière, whose wife had nudged his elbow, "if the old man took the matter seriously, and let his ward marry Désiré, settling on her the absolute possession of his property, good-bye to our chances! And if he lives another five years, our uncle will have at least a million."

"Never," cried Zélie; "never so long as I live and breathe shall Désiré marry the daughter of a bastard, a girl taken in out of charity, picked up in the streets. What next, by Heaven? At his uncle's death my son will be the representative of the Minorets; and the Minorets can show five centuries of good citizenship. It is as good as a noble pedigree. Make your minds easy. Désiré shall marry when we see what he is likely to do in the Chamber of Deputies."

This arrogant pronouncement was seconded by Gothpil, who added:

"With eighty thousand francs a year, Désiré may rise to be president of a Supreme Court, or public prosecutor, which

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leads to a peerage. A foolish marriage would be the ruin of his prospects."

The heirs all began to talk at once, but they were silenced by the blow of his fist that Minoret struck on the table to enable the notary to speak on.

"Your uncle is an excellent and worthy man," said Dionis. "He believes himself immortal; and, like all clever men, he will allow death to overtake him before he has made his will. My opinion, therefore, for the moment, is that he should be induced to invest his capital in such a way as to make it difficult to dispossess you; and the opportunity now offers. Young Portenduère is in Sainte Pélagie, locked up for a hundred and odd thousand francs of debts. His old mother knows he is in prison; she is weeping like a Magdalen, and has asked the Abbé Chaperon to dinner, to talk over the catastrophe, no doubt. Well, I shall go this evening and suggest to your uncle to sell his stock of consolidated five per cents, which are at a hundred and eighteen, and lend the sum necessary to release the prodigal to Madame de Portenduère on the farm at Bordières and her dwelling-house. I am in my rights as a notary in applying to him on behalf of that little idiot of a Portenduère, and it is quite natural that I should wish him to change his investments; I get the commission, the stamps, and the business. If I can get him to take my advice, I shall propose to him to invest the rest of his capital in real estate. I have some splendid lands for sale in my office. When once his fortune is invested in real estate, or in mortgages on land in this neighborhood, it will not easily fly away. It is always easy to raise difficulties in the way of realizing the capital if he should wish to do so."

The heirs, struck by the soundness of this logic, much more skilful than that of M. Josse, expressed themselves by approving murmurs.

"So settle it among yourselves," added the notary, in conclusion, "to keep your uncle in this town, where he has his own ways, and where you can keep an eye on him. If you can find a lover for the girl, you will hinder her marrying."

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"But if she were to marry him?" said Goupil, urged by an ambitious instinct.

"That would not be so bad after all; your loss would be set down in plain figures, and you would know what the old man would give her," answered the notary. "Still, if you set Désiré at her, he might easily play fast and loose with her till the old man's death. Marriages are arranged and upset again."

"The shortest way," said Goupil, "if the doctor is likely to live a long time yet, would be to get her married to some good fellow, who would take her out of the way by settling with her at Sens, or Montargis, or Orleans, with a hundred thousand francs down."

Dionis, Massin, Zélie, and Goupil, the only clear heads of the party, exchanged glances full of meaning.

"He would be a maggot in the pear," said Zélie in Massin's ear.

"Why was he allowed to come?" replied the registrar.

"That would just suit you!" exclaimed Désiré to Goupil; "but how could you ever keep yourself decent enough to please the old man and his ward?"

"You don't think small beer of yourself!" said Minoret, understanding Goupil at last.

This course jest was greeted with shouts of laughter. But the lawyer's clerk glared at the laughers with such a sweeping and terrible gaze that silence was immediately restored.

"In these days," Zélie whispered to Massin, "notaries think only of their own interests. What if Dionis, to get his commission, should take Ursule's side?"

"I know he is safe," replied the registrar, with a keen twinkle in his wicked little eyes; he was about to add, "I have him in my power," but he abstained.

"I am entirely of Dionis' opinion," he said aloud.

"And so am I," exclaimed Zélie, though she already suspected the notary and Massin to be in collusion for their own advantage.

"My wife has given our vote," said the postmaster, sipping

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a glass of spirits, though his face was already purple with digesting the meal and from a considerable consumption of wine and liqueurs.

"It is quite right," said the tax-collector.

"Then I will call on him after dinner?" asked Dionis.

"If Monsieur Dionis is right," said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, "we ought to go to see your uncle, as we used, every Sunday evening, and do all Monsieur Dionis has just told us."

"Yes, indeed! To be received as we have been," exclaimed Zélie. "After all, we have an income of over forty thousand francs; and he has refused all our invitations. We are as good as he is. I can steer my own ship, thank you, though I cannot write prescriptions!"

"As I am far from having forty thousand francs a year," said Madame Massin, nettled, "I am not anxious to lose ten thousand!"

"We are his nieces; we will look after him; we shall see what is going on," said Madame Crémière. "And some day, Cousin Zélie, you will be beholden to us."

"Be civil to Ursule; old Jordy left her his savings," said the notary, putting his right forefinger to his lip.

"I will mind my P's and Q's," said Désiré.

"You were a match for Desroches, the sharpest attorney in Paris," said Goupil to his master, as they quitted the house.

"And they dispute our bills," remarked the notary, with a bitter smile.

The heirs, seeing out Dionis and his head-clerk, found themselves at the gate, all with faces heated from the meal, just as the congregation came out from vespers. As the notary had foretold, the Abbé Chaperon had given his arm to old Madame de Portenduère.

"She has dragged him to vespers!" cried Madame Massin, pointing out to Madame Crémière Ursule coming out of the church with her uncle.

"Let us go and speak to him," suggested Madame Crémière, going forward.

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The change which the conclave had produced in all their countenances astonished Doctor Minoret. He wondered what the cause could be of this friendliness to order, and out of curiosity he favored a meeting between Ursule and these two women, who were eager to address her with exaggerated sweetness and forced smiles.

"Uncle, you will allow us to call on you this evening?" said Madame Crémière. "We sometimes think we are in the way; but it is long now since our children have paid their respects to you, and our daughters are of an age to make friends with dear Ursule."

"Ursule justifies her name," said the Doctor; "she is not at all tame."

"Let us tame her," said Madame Massin. "And besides, my dear uncle," added the prudent housewife, trying to conceal her scheming under a semblance of economy, "we have been told that your charming goddaughter has such a talent for the piano, that we should be enchanted to hear her play. Madame Crémière and I are rather inclined to have her master to teach our girls; for if he had seven or eight pupils he might fix a price for his lessons within our means——"

"By all means," said the old man; "all the more, indeed, because I am thinking of getting a singing-master for Ursule."

"Very well; then this evening, uncle; and we will bring your grandnephew Désiré, who is now a full-fledged attorney."

"Till this evening," replied Minoret, who wished to study these mean souls.

His two nieces shook hands with Ursule, saying with affected graciousness, "Till this evening."

"Oh, dear godfather, you can read my heart, I believe!" cried Ursule, with a grateful look at the old man.

"You have a good voice," he said. "And I also mean to give you drawing and Italian lessons. A woman," he added, looking at Ursule as he opened the gate of his own courtyard, "ought to be educated in such a way as to be equal to any position in which she may be placed by marriage."

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Ursule blushed as red as a cherry; her guardian seemed to be thinking of the very person she herself was thinking of. Feeling herself on the point of confessing to the doctor the involuntary impulse which made her think of Savinien, and refer all her strivings after perfection to him, she went to sit under the bower of creepers, against which she looked from a distance like a white and blue flower.

"Now, you see, godfather, your nieces were kind to me; they were very nice just now," said she, as he followed her, to mislead him as to the thoughts which had made her pensive.

"Poor little thing!" said the old man. He laid Ursule's hand on his arm, patting it gently, and led her along the terrace by the river, where no one could overhear them.

"Why do you say, 'Poor little thing'?"

"Can you not see that they are afraid of you?"

"But why?"

"My heirs are at this moment very uneasy about my conversion; they ascribe it, no doubt, to your influence, and fancy that I shall deprive them of their inheritance to make you the richer."

"But you will not?" said Ursule with simplicity, and looking in his face.

"Ah, divine comfort of my old age," said the old man, lifting her up, and kissing her on both cheeks. "It was for her sake and not for my own, O God, that I besought Thee just now to suffer me to live till I shall have given her into the keeping of some good man worthy of her!—You will see, my angel, the farce that the Minorets and the Crémières and the Massins are going to play here. You want to prolong and beautify my life. They! they think of nothing but my death!"

"God forbids us to hate; but if that is true—oh, I scorn them!" cried Ursule.

"Dinner!" cried La Bougival, from the top of the steps, which, on the garden side, were at the end of the gallery.

Ursule and the doctor were eating their dessert in the

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pretty dining-room painted to imitate Chinese lacquer, which had ruined Levrault-Levrault, when the Justice walked in. The doctor, as his most signal mark of intimacy, offered him a cup of his own coffee, a mixture of Mocha with Bourbon and Martinique berries, roasted, ground, and made by his own hands in a silver coffee-pot of the kind patented by Chaptal.

"Well, well," said Bongrand, putting up his spectacles, and looking at the old man with a sly twinkle, "the town is by the ears! Your appearance at church has revolutionized your relations. You are going to leave everything to the priests and to the poor! You have stirred them up, and they are astir! Oh! I saw their first commotion on the Church Square; they were as fussy as a nest of ants robbed of their eggs."

"What did I tell you, Ursule?" exclaimed the old man. "Even at the risk of grieving you, my child, am I not bound to teach you to know the world, and to put you on your guard against undeserved enmity?"

"I wanted to say a few words to you on that subject," said Bongrand, seizing the opportunity of speaking to his old friend about Ursule's future prospects.

The doctor put a black velvet cap on his white head, and the Justice kept on his hat as a protection against the dew, and they walked together up and down the terrace, talking over the means of securing to Ursule the little fortune the doctor proposed to leave her. Bongrand knew the opinion of Dionis as to the invalidity of any will made by the doctor in Ursule's favor, for Nemours was too inquisitive as to the Minoret inheritance for this question not to have been discussed by the wise-heads of the town. He himself had decided that Ursule was an alien in blood as regarded Doctor Minoret; but he was fully aware that the spirit of the law was adverse to the recognition of illegitimate offspring as members of the family. The framers of the Code had only anticipated the weakness of fathers and mothers for their natural children; it had not been supposed that uncles or

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aunts might have such tender feelings for an illegitimate relation as to favor his descendants. There was evidently an omission in the law.

"In any other country," said he to the doctor, after setting forth the state of the law which Goupil, Dionis, and Désiré had just explained to the heirs, "Ursule would have nothing to fear. She is a legitimate child, and her father's disabilities ought only to affect the money left by Valentin Mirouët, your father-in-law. But in France the bench is unluckily very clever and very logical; it insists on the spirit of the law. Pleaders will talk of morality, and prove that the omission in the Code arises from the single-mindedness of the framers, who never foresaw such a case, but who nevertheless established a principle. A lawsuit would be lengthy and costly. With Zélie on the other side it would be carried to the Court of Appeal; and I cannot be sure that I should be still living when the case was tried."

"The strongest case is not certain to stand," cried the doctor. "I can see the documents on the subject already. 'To what degree of relationship ought the disabilities of natural children in the matter of inheritance to extend?' and the glory of a clever lawyer is to gain a rotten suit."

"On my honor," said Bongrand, "I would not take it upon myself to assert that the judges would not widen the interpretation of the law so as to extend its protection of marriage, which is the everlasting foundation of society."

Without explaining his intentions, the doctor rejected the idea of a trust. But as to the notion of marrying her, which Bongrand suggested as a means of securing her his fortune—

"Poor little thing!" cried the doctor. "I may live fifteen years yet. What would become of her?"

"Well, then, what do you propose?" said Bongrand.

"We must think about it.—I shall see," replied the old doctor, evidently at a loss for an answer.

At this instant Ursule came to tell the friends that Dionis wished to see the doctor.

"Dionis already!" exclaimed Minoret, looking at the Justice. "Yes," he said to Ursule; "let him be shown in."

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"I will bet my spectacles to a brimstone match that he is your heirs' stalking-horse. They breakfasted together at the posting-house, and something has been plotted there."

The notary, following Ursule, came out into the garden. After the usual civilities and a few commonplace remarks, Dionis begged for a moment's private conversation. Ursule and Bongrand went into the drawing-room.

"We must think about it!—I shall see!" said Bongrand to himself, echoing the doctor's last words. "That is what clever people think; then death overtakes them, and they leave those who are dearest to them in the greatest difficulties!"

The distrust a man of business feels of a man of talent is extraordinary. He cannot admit that the greater includes the less. But this very distrust, perhaps, implies praise. Seeing these superior minds inhabiting the high peaks of human thought, men of business do not believe them capable of descending to the infinitely small details which, like interest in the world of finance, or microscopic creatures in natural history, at last accumulate till they equal the capital, or constitute a world. It is a mistake. The man of feeling and the man of genius see everything.

Bongrand, nettled by the doctor's persistent silence, but urged, no doubt, by Ursule's interests, which he feared were compromised, determined to protect her against her rivals. He was in despair at not knowing what was going on between the old man and Dionis.

"However pure-minded Ursule may be," thought he, as he looked at her, "there is one point on which young girls are wont to have their own ideas of jurisprudence and morality. Let us try!"—"The Minoret-Levraults," said he to Ursule, as he settled his spectacles, "are quite capable of proposing that you should marry their son."

The poor child turned pale. She had been too well brought up, and had too much perfect delicacy, to go and listen to what her uncle and Dionis were saying; but after a short deliberation she thought she might go into the room, think-

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ing that if she were in the way her godfather would make her understand it. The Chinese summer-house, which was the doctor's private study, had the shutters of the glass door left open. Ursule's idea was that she would go herself to close them. She apologized for leaving the lawyer alone in the drawing-room; but he smiled and said:

"Do so, do so."

Ursule went to the steps leading from the Chinese summer-house down to the garden, and there she stood for some minutes slowly closing the Venetian shutters and looking at the sunset. Then she heard this answer spoken by the doctor as he came towards the summer-house:

"My heirs would be delighted to see me possessed of real estate and mortgages. They fancy that my fortune would be much more safely invested. I can guess all they could say; and you, perhaps, are their representative. But, my dear sir, my arrangements are unalterable. My heirs will have the capital of the fortune I brought here with me; they may accept that as a certainty, and leave me in peace. If either of them should make any change in what I believe it to be my duty to do for that child" (and he pointed to his goddaughter), "I will come back from the other world to torment him!—So Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère may remain in prison if his release depends on me," added the doctor. "I shall not sell any of my securities."

As she heard the last words of this speech, Ursule felt the first, the only grief she had ever known. She rested her forehead against the shutter, and clung to it for support.

"Good heavens! what ails her?" cried the old doctor; "she is colorless. Such emotion just after dinner might kill her!"

He put out his arm to hold Ursule, who fell almost fainting.

"Good-evening, monsieur; leave me," he said to the notary.

He carried his goddaughter to a huge easy-chair, dating from Louis XV., which stood in his study, seized a phial of ether from his medicine store, and made her inhale it.

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"Go and take my place, my friend," said he to Bongrand, who was alarmed; "I must stay with her."

The Justice walked to the gate with the notary, asking him, but without any show of eagerness, "What has come over Ursule?"

"I do not know," said Monsieur Dionis. "She was standing on the steps listening to us; and when her uncle refused to lend the necessary sum to release young Portenduère, who is in prison for debt—for he had not a Monsieur Bongrand to defend him as Monsieur du Rouvre had—she turned pale and tottered. Does she love him? Can there be——?"

"At fifteen!" said Bongrand, interrupting Dionis.

"She was born in February 1814. In four months she will be sixteen."

"But she has never seen her neighbor," replied the Justice. "No, it is just an attack."

"An attack of the heart," said the notary.

Dionis was much delighted by his discovery; it would avert the dreaded marriage by which the doctor might have frustrated the hopes of his heirs, while Bongrand saw his castles in the air in ruins; he had long dreamed of a marriage between his own son and Ursule.

"If the poor child should be in love with that youth, it would be unfortunate for her. Madame de Portenduère is a Bretonne, and crazy about noble birth," replied the Justice, after a pause.

"Happily—for the honor of the Portenduères," said the notary, who had nearly betrayed himself.

To do the worthy and honorable lawyer full justice, it must be said that, on his way from the gate to the drawing-room, he gave up, not without regret for his son's loss, the hope he had cherished of one day calling Ursule his daughter. He intended to give his son six thousand francs a year as soon as he was appointed deputy recorder; and if the doctor would have settled a hundred thousand francs on Ursule, the young couple should have been patterns of a happy household. His Eugène was a loyal and accomplished young fellow. Per-

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haps he had a little over-praised Eugène, and perhaps old Minoret's suspicions had been aroused by that.

"I will fall back on the Mayor's daughter," thought Bongrand. "But Ursule without a penny would be better than Mademoiselle Levrault-Crémière with her million. Now we must see what can be done to get Ursule married to this young Portenduère, if, in fact, she loves him."

After closing the doors on the side next the library and the garden, the doctor led the girl to the window that looked over the river.

"What ails you, cruel child?" he said. "Your life is my life. Without your smile what would become of me?"

"Savinien—in prison!" answered she, and with these words a torrent of tears burst from her eyes, and she began to sob.

"Now all will be well," said the old man to himself, as he stood feeling her pulse with a father's anxiety. "Alas! she has all my poor wife's nervous sensibility!" he thought; and he fetched a stethoscope, which he placed over Ursule's heart and listened. "Well, there is nothing wrong there," he said to himself. "I did not know, my sweetheart, that you loved him so much already," he went on, as he looked at her. "But think to me as if to yourself, and tell me all that has occurred between you."

"I do not love him, godfather; we have never spoken to each other," she sobbed out; "but to know that the poor young man is in prison, and to hear that you, who are so kind, refuse sternly to help him out——"

"Ursule, my sweet little angel, if you do not love him, why have you put a red dot to the day of Saint-Savinien as you have to that of Saint-Denis? Come, tell me all the smallest incidents of this love affair."

Ursule colored, and swallowed down a few tears; for a minute there was silence between them.

"Are you afraid of your father, of your friend, your mother, your physician, your godfather, whose heart has within these few days become even more soft and loving than it was?"

"Well, then, dear godfather," said she, "I will open my

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soul to you. In the month of May Monsieur Savinien came to see his mother. Till that visit I had never paid the least attention to him. When he went away to live in Paris I was a little child, and I saw no difference, I swear to you, between a young man—and others like you, excepting that I loved you, and never imagined I could love any one better, whoever he might be. Monsieur Savinien arrived by the mail-coach the night before his mother's birthday without our knowing of it. At seven next morning, after saying my prayers, as I opened the window to air my room, I saw the open windows of Monsieur Savinien's room, and Monsieur Savinien himself in his dressing-gown engaged in shaving himself, and doing everything with such grace in his movements—in short, I thought him very nice. He combed his black moustache, and the little tuft on his chin, and I saw his throat white and round.—Oh! must I say it all?—I noticed that his fresh neck, and his face, and his beautiful black hair were quite unlike yours when I see you shaving yourself; and something rose up in me from I know not where—like a mist rushing in waves to my heart, to my head, and so violently that I had to sit down. I could not stand; I was trembling. But I longed so much to see him that I pulled myself up on tiptoe; then he saw me, and for fun he blew me a kiss from the ends of his fingers, and——"

"And——?"

"And I hid myself," she went on, "equally ashamed and happy, without understanding why I was ashamed of my happiness. This feeling, which bewildered my soul while giving it an unexplained sense of power, came over me each time that I saw his young face again in fancy. Indeed, I liked to have that feeling, though it was so painfully agitating. As I went to mass an irresistible force made me look at Monsieur Savinien giving his arm to his mother, and his way of walking, and his clothes—everything about him, to the sound of his boots on the pavement, seemed so pretty. The least thing about him, his hand in his fine kid glove, had a sort of charm for me. And yet I was strong enough not

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to think of him during the service. As we came out I waited in the church to let Madame de Portenduère go first, so as to walk behind him. I cannot tell you how much I was interested in all these little things. On coming in, as I turned round to shut the gate——"

"And La Bougival?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, I had let her go to the kitchen," said Ursule innocently. "So I could, of course, see Monsieur Savinien standing squarely to look at me. Oh, dear godfather, I felt so proud as I fancied I saw in his eyes a sort of surprise and admiration, and I do not know what I would not have done to give him cause to look at me. I felt as though henceforth I ought to think of nothing but of how to please him. His look is now the sweetest reward of all I can do right. From that moment I have thought of him incessantly and in spite of myself.—Monsieur Savinien went away that evening, and I have not seen him since; the Rue des Bourgeois has seemed quite empty, and he has taken my heart away with him, as it were, without knowing it."

"And that is all?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, all, godfather," she said with a sigh, in which regret at having no more to tell was lost in the grief of the moment.

"My dear child," said the old man, drawing Ursule on to his knee, "you will soon be sixteen years old, and your life as a woman will begin. You are now between your blissful childhood, which is coming to an end, and the agitations of love, which will make life stormy for you, for you have the highly strung nerves of an excessively sensitive nature. It is love, my child, that has come upon you," said the old man, with a look of deep pathos, "love in its holy simplicity, love as it ought to be, involuntary and swift, coming like a thief that takes all—yes, all! And I was prepared for it. I have studied women carefully, and I know that, though with most of them love does not wholly possess them till after many proofs, many miracles of affection, if such as these do not speak nor yield till they are conquered, there are others who, under the sway of a sympathy which can now be accounted for by

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magnetic fluids, are vanquished in a moment. I can tell you now: as soon as I saw the lovely woman who bore your name, I felt that I should love her alone and faithfully without knowing whether in our characters or our persons we should prove suitable. Is there a second sight in love? How can the question be answered, when we see so many unions, which have been sanctioned by such a sacred contract, destroyed afterwards, and giving rise to almost eternal hatred and intense aversion? The senses may be in affinity while minds are discordant, and some persons perhaps live more by the mind than by the senses. On the other hand, characters are often suited in persons who cannot please each other.

"These two opposite phenomena, which would account for many catastrophes, demonstrate the wisdom of the law which leaves to parents supreme control over the marriage of their children; for a young girl is often the dupe of one of these two hallucinations. And, indeed, I do not blame you. The feelings you experience, the emotional impulse which rushes from its hitherto unknown focus to your heart and to your brain, the joy with which you think of Savinien, are all quite natural. But, my adored child, as our good Abbé Chaperon will have told you, society demands the sacrifice of many natural impulses. The destiny of men is one thing, the destiny of women another. It was in my power to choose Ursule Mirouët for my wife, to go to her and tell her how much I loved her, whereas a young girl is false to her virtue when she solicits the love of the man she loves; a woman is not, as we are, at liberty to follow up in broad daylight the fulfilment of her hopes. Thus, modesty is in women, and especially in you, the insurmountable barrier which guards the secrets of your heart. Your hesitation to confide even to me what your first emotions had been, shows me plainly that you would suffer the worst torments rather than confess to Savinien——"

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed.

"But, my child, you must do more. You must repress these impulses of your heart, you must forget them."

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"Why?"

"Because, my little darling, you must love no man but him who will be your husband; and even if Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère should love you——"

"I had not thought of such a thing."

"Listen to me.—Even if he should love you, even if his mother were to ask me to give him your hand, I would not consent to the marriage till I had subjected Savinien to a long and mature course of proof. His recent conduct has placed him under a cloud in every good family, and raised such barriers between him and any young girl of fortune as it will be hard to break down."

A heavenly smile checked Ursule's tears, as she said, "Misfortune has its good uses!"

The doctor found nothing to say to her artlessness.

"What has he done, godfather?" she inquired.

"In two years, my darling, he has run into debt in Paris to the sum of a hundred and twenty thousand francs! He has been so clumsy as to let himself be taken and imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie, a blunder which disgraces a young man for ever in these days. A spendthrift who can bring his mother to grief and penury would kill his wife with despair, as your poor father did."

"Do you think he might amend his ways?" she asked.

"If his mother pays his debts, he will be left without a penny, and I know no harder punishment for a nobleman than to be penniless."

This reply made Ursule thoughtful; she wiped away her tears, and said to her godfather:

"If you can save him, do so, godfather. Such a service will give you the right to admonish him; you will remonstrate with him——"

"And then," said the doctor, mimicking her tone, "he may perhaps come here, and the old lady too, and we shall see them, and——"

"At this moment I am thinking only of him," replied Ursule, coloring.

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"Think of him no more, my poor child. It is madness," said the doctor gravely. "Never would Madame de Portenduère—a Kergarouët—if she had but three hundred francs a year to live on, consent to see the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, grandnephew of the late Comte de Portenduère, lieutenant-general of the King's naval forces, and son of the Vicomte de Portenduère, ship's captain, married to—whom? Ursule Mirouët, the daughter of a regimental bandmaster, without a fortune; and whose father—now is the time to tell you—was the bastard son of an organist, my father-in-law."

"Yes, godfather, you are right. We are equals only in the eyes of God. I will think of him no more—except in my prayers!" she exclaimed through the sobs with which she received this information. "Give him all you intended to leave me. What can a poor girl like me want of money!—and he, in prison!"

"Lay all your distresses before God, and He perhaps will intervene to help us."

For some minutes silence reigned. When Ursule, who dared not look at her godfather, presently raised her eyes to his face, she was deeply moved by seeing tears flowing down his withered cheeks. The tears of an old man are as terrible as those of a child are natural.

"What, oh, what is the matter with you?" she cried, falling at his feet and kissing his hands. "Do you not trust me?"

"I, who only wish to satisfy your every wish, am compelled to cause the first great sorrow of your life! I am as much grieved as you are! I never shed a tear but when my children died and my Ursule.—There, I will do anything you like!" he exclaimed.

Ursule, through her tears, gave her godfather a look that was like a flash of light. She smiled.

"Now, come into the drawing-room and contrive to keep your own counsel about all this, my child," said the doctor, and he went out, leaving her alone in the study.

The fatherly soul was so weak before this smile that he was about to speak a word of hope which might have deluded his goddaughter.

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At this moment Madame de Portenduère, alone with the curé in her chilly little ground-floor drawing-room, had just finished confiding her woes to the good priest, her only friend. She held in her hand some letters which the Abbé had returned to her after reading them, and which had been the crown of her misery. Seated in an armchair, on one side of the square table covered with the remains of the dessert, the old lady looked at the curé, who, on the other, huddled into a deep chair, was stroking his chin with that strange gesture peculiar to the stage valet, to mathematicians, and priests, as betraying meditation on a problem difficult of solution.

The little room, lighted by two windows looking on the street, and lined with wainscoting painted gray, was so damp that the lower panels displayed the geometrical crackle of decaying wood when it is no longer held together by paint. The floor, of red tiles rubbed smooth by the lady's only servant, made little round hempen mats a necessity in front of each chair, and on one of these mats were the Abbé's feet. The curtains, of light-green flowered damask, were drawn, and the shutters closed. Two wax-candles lighted the table; the rest of the room was half dark. Need it be said that between the windows a fine pastel by Latour showed the portrait of the famous Admiral de Portenduère, the rival of Suffren, of Kergarouët, of Guichen, of Simeuse? On the wainscot opposite the chimney might be seen the Vicomte de Portenduère and the old lady's mother, a Kergarouët-Ploëgat.

Savinien, then, was great-nephew to Vice-Admiral Kergarouët, and cousin to the Comte de Portenduère, the Admiral's grandson, both of them very rich. The Vice-Admiral lived in Paris, and the Comte de Portenduère at his château of the same name in Dauphiné. The Count, his cousin, represented the elder branch, and Savinien was the only scion of the younger branch of the Portenduères.

The Count, a man of past forty, married to a rich wife, had three children. His fortune, augmented several times by inheritance, brought him in, it was said, sixty thousand francs a year. He represented the department of the Isère as deputy,

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spending the winter in Paris, where he had repurchased the mansion of the Portenduères with the indemnity paid him under Villèle's act. The Vice-Admiral had lately married his niece,* Mademoiselle de Fontaine, solely to settle his fortune on her. Thus the young Vicomte's errors had perhaps deprived him of the interest of two powerful friends.

Savinien, young and handsome, if he had entered the navy, with his name and the interest of an admiral and of a deputy to back him, might perhaps at three-and-twenty have been already first-lieutenant; but his mother, averse to seeing her only son engage in a military career, had had him educated at Nemours by one of the Abbé Chaperon's curates, and had flattered herself that she might keep her son at her side till her death. She had hoped to marry him very prudently to a demoiselle d'Aiglemont, with twelve thousand francs a year; the name of Portenduère, and the farm-lands of Bordières, justifying his pretensions to her hand. This moderate but judicious scheme, which might have re-established the family in another generation, had been frustrated by events. The d'Aiglemonts were now ruined, and one of their daughters, Hélène, the eldest, had vanished without any explanation being offered by the family.

The tedium of a life devoid of out-door interests, of purpose, and of action, with nothing to support it but the love of a son for his mother, so wearied Savinien that he burst his bonds, light as they were, and vowed he would never live in a country town; discovering, somewhat late, that his future did not lie in the Rue des Bourgeois. So at one-and-twenty he left his mother to introduce himself to his relations, and try his fortune in Paris.

The contrast between life at Nemours and life in the capital could not fail to be fatal to a youth of one-and-twenty, perfectly free, with no one to contradict him, of course greedy for pleasure, and to whom the name of Portenduère and the wealth of his connections opened every drawing-room. Convinced that his mother had somewhere stored the savings of

* See "*Le Bal de Sceaux.*"

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twenty years, Savinien had soon squandered the six thousand francs she had given him to spend in Paris. This sum did not defray the expenses of the first six months, and by that time he owed twice as much to his lodging-keeper, his tailor, his bootmaker, to a man from whom he hired carriages and horses, to a jeweler, in short, to all the tradespeople who supply the luxury of youth. He had hardly achieved making himself known, had hardly learned to speak, to enter a room, to wear and choose a waistcoat, to order his clothes and tie his cravat, when he found himself possessed of thirty thousand francs of debts, and had not yet got further than trying to find an insinuating phrase in which to declare his passion to Madame de Sérizy, the sister of the Marquis de Ronquerolles, an elegant woman still, whose youth had shone through the Empire.

"And how did you fellows get out of the scrape?" said Savinien one day after breakfast to some young men of fashion with whom he was intimate, as even at this day young men become intimate when their pretensions in all respects tend to the same ends, and when they proclaim an impossible equality. "You are no richer than I; you live on without a care, you support yourselves, and I am already in debt."

"We all began in the same way," they replied, with a laugh—Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, Maxime de Trailles, Émile Blondet, the dandies of that day.

"If de Marsay was rich at beginning life, it was a mere chance!" said their host, a parvenu named Finot, who tried to rub elbows with these young men. "And if he had been any one else," he added, bowing to de Marsay, "his fortune might have been his ruin."

"You have hit the word," said Maxime de Trailles.

"And the idea too," replied Rastignac.

"My dear boy," said de Marsay gravely to Savinien, "debts are the sleeping partners of experience. A good college education, with masters for the ornamental and the useful, from which you learn nothing, costs sixty thousand francs. If

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the education the world gives you costs double, it teaches you life, business, and politics; to know men, and sometimes women."

Blondet capped the lecture by a parody on a line of La Fontaine's:

The world sells us dear what we fancy it gives!

But instead of reflecting on the good sense in what the most skilled pilots of the Paris shoals had said, Savinien took it all as a jest.

"Take care, my dear fellow," said de Marsay, "you have a fine name, and if you cannot acquire the fortune your name demands, you may end your days as quartermaster to a cavalry regiment,

"For nobler heads than thine have had a fall,"

he added, quoting Corneille, and taking Savinien's arm. "It is about six years," he went on, "since a certain young Comte d'Esgrignon came among us, who did not live more than two years in the paradise of fashion! Alas, his career was as that of the sky-rocket. He rose as high as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and he fell into his native town, where he is now expiating his sins between a snuffling old father and rubbers of whist at two sous a point. Go, then, and frankly explain your position to Madame de Sérizy; do not be ashamed; she will be of great use to you; whereas, if you play a charade of first love, she will pose as a Raphael Madonna, play innocent games, and send you a most expensive excursion round the 'Pays du Tendre.'"

Savinien, still too young and too sensitive to a gentleman's honor, dared not confess the state of his fortunes to Madame de Sérizy. Madame de Portenduère, at a moment when her son knew not which way to turn, sent him twenty thousand francs, all she had, in answer to a letter in which Savinien, taught by his companions the tactics of assault by sons on their parents' strong-boxes, hinted at bills to meet, and the

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disgrace of dishonoring his endorsements. With this help, he got on to the end of the first year. During the second year, as a captive at the wheels of Madame de Sérizy's car—for she had taken a serious fancy to him, and was teaching him his paces—he availed himself of the perilous aid of money-lenders. A deputy, named des Lupeaulx, who was his friend, and a friend of his cousin de Portenduère, introduced him one miserable day to Gobseck, to Gigonnet, and to Palma, who, being duly and fully informed as to the value of his mother's property, made things easy for him. The money-lenders, by the delusive aid of renewals, gave him a happy life for about eighteen months more. Without daring to neglect Madame de Sérizy, the hapless boy fell desperately in love with the young Comtesse de Kergarouët, a prude, as all young women are who are waiting for the death of an old husband, and who are clever enough to save up their virtue for a second marriage. Savinien, unable to understand that virtue based on reasons is invincible, paid his court to Emilie de Kergarouët with all the display of a rich man; he was never missing from a ball or a theatre if she was to be there.

"My boy, you have not enough powder to blow up that rock!" de Marsay said to him one evening, with a laugh.

This young prince of Paris fashion vainly attempted, out of commiseration, to make the lad understand Emilie de Fontaine's character; only the gloomy light of disaster and the darkness of a prison could enlighten Savinien. A bill of exchange, rashly assigned to a jeweler in collusion with the money-lenders, who did not choose to take the odium of arresting him, led to Savinien de Portenduère's being consigned to Sainte-Pélagie, unknown to his friends. As soon as the news was known to Rastignac, de Marsay, and Lucien de Rubempré, they all three went to see Savinien, and, finding him absolutely destitute, each offered him a note for a thousand francs. His own servant, bribed by two creditors, had led them to the apartment where Savinien lodged in secret, and everything had been seized but the clothes and a few trinkets he had on him.

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The three young men, fortified by a capital dinner, while they drank some sherry that de Marsay had brought with him, catechized Savinien as to the state of his affairs, ostensibly to make arrangements for the future, but in reality, no doubt, to pass sentence on him.

"When your name is Savinien de Portenduère," cried Rastignac, "when you have a future peer of France for your cousin, and the Admiral de Kergarouët for your granduncle, if you are such a blunderer as to let yourself be sent to Sainte-Pélagie, at any rate you must get out of it, my dear fellow!"

"Why did you say nothing about it to me?" cried de Marsay. "My traveling carriage was at your orders, ten thousand francs, and letters for Germany. We know Gobseck and Gigonnet, and the other beasts of prey; we would have brought them to terms. To begin with, what ass brought you to drink of these poisoned waters?" asked de Marsay.

"Des Lupeaulx."

The three young men looked at each other, communicating the same thought, a suspicion, but without speaking it.

"Explain your resources; show us your hand," said de Marsay.

When Savinien had described his mother and her cap and bows, her little house with its three windows fronting on the Rue des Bourgeois, with no garden but a yard with a well, and an outhouse to hold fire-logs; when he had estimated the value of this dwelling, built of rough stone set in reddish cement, and that of the farm of Bordières, the three dandies exchanged glances, and, with a look of deep meaning, quoted the word spoken by the Abbé in Alfred de Musset's play *les Marrons du feu*—for his *Contes d'Espagne* had just come out:

"Dismal!"

"Your mother would pay in response to a skilful letter," said Rastignac.

"Yes; but after——?" cried de Marsay.

"If you had only been put into the hackney coach," said Lucien, "the King's Government would give you a berth in

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a foreign mission; but Sainte-Pélagie is not the ante-room to an Embassy."

"You are not up to the mark for life in Paris," said Rastignac.

"Let's see," de Marsay began, looking at Savinien from head to foot as a horse-dealer examines a horse. "You have good blue eyes well set, you have a well-shaped white forehead, splendid black hair, a neat little moustache which looks well on your pale skin, and a slight figure; your foot bespeaks a good breed, shoulders and chest strong, and not too like a coal-heaver's. I should call you a good specimen of a dark man. Your face is in the style of that of Louis XIII.; not much color, and a well-shaped nose; and you have besides the thing that appeals to woman, the indescribable something of which men themselves are never conscious, which is in the air, the walk, the tone of voice, the flash of the eyes, the gesture, a hundred little things which women see, and to which they attach a meaning which eludes us. You do not know yourself, my dear fellow. With a little style, in six months you could fascinate an Englishwoman with a hundred thousand francs, especially if you use the title of Vicomte de Portenduère to which you have a right. My charming mother-in-law, Lady Dudley, who has not her equal for skewering two hearts together, will discover the damsel for you in some alluvial district of Great Britain. But then you must be able to stave off your debts for ninety days, and know how to do it by some skilful stroke of high finance. Oh! why did you say nothing of it to me? At Baden these money-lenders would have respected you, have served you perhaps; but after clapping you in prison they despise you. The money-lender is like society, like the mob—on his knees to a man who is clever enough to take advantage of him, and pitiless to a lamb. In the eyes of a certain set, Sainte-Pélagie is a demon which takes the shine off a young man's soul to a terrible extent. Will you have my opinion, my dear boy? I say to you as I did to little d'Esgrignon: Pay your debts cautiously, keeping enough to live on for three years, and get married in the

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country to the first girl who has thirty thousand francs a year. In three years you will be sure to have found some suitable heiress who will gladly hear herself called Madame de Portenduère. These are the words of wisdom. Let us have a drink. I propose a toast: 'To the girl with money!'"

The young men did not leave their ex-friend till the official hour of parting, and on the threshold of the gate they said to each other, "He is not game!—He is very much crushed! —Will he pick himself up again?"

The next day Savinien wrote to his mother, a general confession covering twenty-two pages. Madame de Portenduère, after crying for a whole day, wrote first to her son, promising to get him out of prison, and then to the Comtes de Portenduère and de Kergarouët.

The letters the curé had just read, and which the poor mother now held in her hand, moist with her tears, had reached her that morning, and had broken her heart.

"PARIS, *September* 1829.

To Madame de Portenduère.

"MADAME,—You cannot doubt the great interest which the admiral takes in your troubles. The news you write to M. de Kergarouët distresses me all the more because my house was open to your son; we were proud of him. If Savinien had had more confidence in the admiral, we would have taken him in charge, and he would now have a suitable appointment; but the unhappy boy told us nothing! The admiral could not possibly pay a hundred thousand francs; he is himself in debt, and has involved himself for me, for I knew nothing of his pecuniary position. He regrets it all the more because Savinien, by allowing himself to be arrested, has for the moment tied our hands. If my handsome nephew had not felt for me some foolish passion which smothered the voice of relationship in the arrogance of a lover, we might have sent him to travel in Germany while his affairs here were being arranged. M. de Kergarouët might have asked for a place for his grand-nephew in the naval department; but

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imprisonment for debt cannot fail to paralyze the admiral's efforts. Pay off Savinien's debts, let him go into the navy; he will then make his way like a true Portenduère; he has their fire in his fine black eyes, and we will all help him.

"So do not despair, madame; you still have friends, among whom I beg to be accounted one of the sincerest, and I send you my best wishes with every respect.—From your very devoted servant,

"EMILIE DE KERGAROUËT."

PORTENDUÈRE, *August* 1829.

To Madame de Portenduère.

"MY DEAR AUNT,—I am as much vexed as pained by Savinien's scapegrace doings. Married, as I am, the father of two sons and a daughter, my fortune, moderate indeed in comparison with my position and expectations, does not allow of my reducing it by such a sum as a hundred thousand francs to ransom a Portenduère captive to the Lombards. Sell your farm, pay his debts, and come to Portenduère; you will here find the welcome due to you from us, even if our hearts were not wholly yours. You will live happy, and we will find a wife for Savinien, whom my wife thinks charming. This disaster is nothing; do not let it distress you; it will never be heard of in our remote district, where we know several girls with money—nay, very rich—who will be enchanted to belong to us.

"My wife joins me in assuring you how happy you would make us, and begs you to accept her hopes that this plan may be carried out, with the assurance of our affectionate respect.

"LUC-SAVINIEN, COMTE DE PORTENDUÈRE."

"What letters to write to a Kergarouët!" cried the old Bretonne, wiping her eyes.

"The admiral does not know that his nephew is in prison," said the Abbé Chaperon presently. "Only the Countess has read your letter, and she alone has answered it. But some-

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thing must be done," he added after a pause, "and this is the advice I have the honor to offer you. Do not sell your farm. The present lease is nearly out; it has been running four-and-twenty years; in a few months you can raise the rent to six thousand francs, and demand a premium equal to two years' rent. Borrow from some honest man—not from the townspeople, who make a traffic of mortgages. Your neighbor, now, is a worthy man, a man of the world, who knew the upper classes before the Revolution, and who from being an Atheist has become a Catholic. Do not feel any repugnance for coming to call on him this evening; he will be deeply sensible of your taking such a step; forget for one moment that you are a Kergarouët."

"Never!" said the old mother in a strident tone.

"At any rate, be an amiable Kergarouët. Come when he is alone; he will only take three-and-a-half per cent, perhaps not more than three, and he will do you the service in the most delicate manner. You will be quite satisfied with him. He will go himself to release Savinien, for he will be obliged to sell some securities, and he will bring him home to you."

"Do you mean that little Minoret?"

"Little Minoret is eighty-three years of age," replied the Abbé with a smile. "My dear lady, have a little Christian charity; do not hurt his feelings, he may be useful to you in more ways than one."

"How, may I ask?"

"Well, he has living with him an angel, the heavenliest young girl——"

"Yes, that little Ursule.—Well, and what then?"

The poor curé dared say no more as he heard this.

"Well, what then?" Its harsh severity cut short beforehand the proposal he had been about to make.

"Doctor Minoret is, I believe, exceedingly rich——"

"So much the better for him."

"You have already been the indirect cause of your son's present misfortunes by giving him no opening in life. Beware for the future," said the Abbé sternly. "Shall I announce your proposed visit to your neighbor?"

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"But why, if he were told that I want him, should he not come to me?"

"Well, madame, if you go to him, you will pay three per cent, and if he comes to you, you will pay five," said the Abbé, hitting on this argument to persuade the old lady. "And if you should be forced to sell your farm through Dionis the notary, or Massin the clerk, who would refuse to advance money in the hope of profiting by your disaster, you would lose half the value of Les Bordières. I have not the smallest influence over the Dionis, the Massins, the Levraults, rich country folks who covet your farm, and know that your son is in prison."

"They know it! They know it!" she cried, throwing up her hands.—"Oh, my poor friend, you have let your coffee get cold.—Tiennette! Tiennette!"

Tiennette, an old Brittany peasant of sixty, in the jacket and cap of her province, hastened in and took the curé's coffee to heat it again.

"Wait a minute, Monsieur le Recteur," said she, seeing that the curé was about to drink it. "I will heat it in a bain-marie, and it will be none the worse."

"Very well, then," the priest began again, in his persuasive voice, "I will give the doctor notice of your intended visit, and you will come."

The old lady still would not give in till at the end of an hour's discussion, during which the curé was forced to repeat his arguments ten times over. And even then the haughty daughter of the Kergarouëts only yielded to these last words:

"Savinien would go!"

"Then it had better be I," said she.

Nine o'clock was striking when the little door in the great gate closed behind the curé, who forthwith rang eagerly at the doctor's entrance. The Abbé Chaperon escaped Tiennette to fall on La Bougival, for the old nurse said to him:

"You are very late, Monsieur le Curé!" Just as Tiennette had said, "Why have you left madame so early when she is in trouble?"

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The curé found a large party in the doctor's green and brown drawing-room; for Dionis had been to reassure the heirs on his way to see Massin, and repeat to him his uncle's words.

"Ursule," said he, "has I suspect a love in her heart which will bring her nothing but sorrow and care. She seems to be romantic"—the word applied by notaries to a sensitive nature—"and she will long remain unmarried. So do not be suspicious; pay her all sorts of little attentions, and be the humble servant of your uncle, for he is sharper than a hundred Goupils," added the notary, not knowing that Goupil is a corrupt form of the Latin *vulpes*, a fox.

So Mesdames Massin and Crémière, their husbands, the postmaster and Désiré, with the town doctor and Bongrand, formed an unwonted and turbulent crowd at the old doctor's. As the Abbé went in he heard the sound of a piano. Poor Ursule was ending Beethoven's sonata in A. With the artfulness permissible to the innocent, the girl, enlightened by her godfather, and averse to the family, had selected this solemn music, which must be studied to be appreciated, to disgust these women with their wish to hear her. The finer the music, the less the ignorant enjoy it. So, when the door opened and the Abbé Chaperon put in his venerable head, "Ah! here is Monsieur le Curé!" they all exclaimed, delighted to have to rise and put an end to their torment.

The exclamation found an echo at the card-table, where Bongrand, the town doctor, and the old man himself were victims to the audacity with which the tax-collector, to court his great-uncle, had proposed to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule came away from the piano. The doctor also rose as if to greet the priest, but in fact to put a stop to the game. After many compliments to their uncle on his god-daughter's proficiency, the heirs took their leave.

"Good-night, friends," cried the doctor, as the gate shut.

"So that is what costs so dear!" said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, when they had gone a little way.

"God forbid that I should pay any money to hear my little

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Aline make such a noise as that in the house!" replied Madame Massin.

"She said it was by Beethoven, who is supposed to be a great composer," said the tax-collector. "He has a great name."

"My word! not at Nemours," cried Madame Crémière.

"I believe my uncle arranged it on purpose that we should never go there again," said Massin. "For he certainly winked as he pointed out the green volume to that little minx."

"If that is the only tune they care to dance to, they are wise to keep themselves to themselves," said the postmaster.

"The Justice must be very fond of his game to listen to those rigmarole pieces," said Madame Crémière.

"I shall never be able to play to people who do not understand music," said Ursule, taking her seat near the card-table.

"In persons of a rich organization feeling can only express itself among congenial surroundings," said the curé. "Just as a priest can give no blessing in the presence of the Evil One, and as a chestnut tree dies in a heavy soil, so a musician of genius feels himself morally routed when he is among ignorant listeners. In the arts we need to receive from the souls in which our souls find their medium as much power as we can impart. This axiom, which is a law of human affections, has given rise to the proverbs: 'We must howl with the wolves'; 'Like to like.' But the discomfort you must have felt is known only to tender and sensitive natures."

"Ay, my friends," said the doctor, "and a thing which might only annoy another woman could kill my little Ursule. Ah! when I am no more, raise up between this tender flower and the world such a sheltering hedge as Catullus speaks of—*Ut flos,* etc."

"And yet the ladies were flattering in their remarks to you, Ursule," said the lawyer, smiling.

"Coarsely flattering," observed the town doctor.

"I have always felt such coarseness in insincere praise," replied Monsieur Minoret. "And why?"

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"A true thought has its own refinement," said the Abbé.

"Did you dine with Madame de Portenduère?" said Ursule, questioning the Abbé Chaperon, with a glance of anxious curiosity.

"Yes; the poor lady is in much distress, and it is not impossible that she may call on you this evening, Monsieur Minoret."

"If she is in trouble and needs me, I will go to her," said the doctor. "Let us finish the first rubber."

Ursule pressed her uncle's hand under the table.

"Her son," said the Justice, "was rather too simple to live in Paris without a mentor. When it came to my knowledge that inquiries were being made of the notary here about the old lady's farm, I guessed that he was borrowing on his reversion."

"Do you think him capable of that?" said Ursule, with a terrible flash at Monsieur Bongrand, who said to himself, "Yes, alas! she is in love with him."

"Yes and No," said the town doctor. "There is good in Savinien, and the proof of it is that he is in prison. A thorough rogue never gets caught."

"My friends," said old Minoret, "enough of this for this evening. We must not leave a poor mother to weep for a minute longer when we can dry her tears."

The four friends rose and went out. Ursule accompanied them as far as the gate, watched her godfather and the curé while they knocked at the door opposite; and when Tiennette had admitted them, she sat down on one of the stone piers in the courtyard, La Bougival standing near her.

"Madame la Vicomtesse," said the curé, going first into the little room, "Doctor Minoret could not allow you to have the trouble of going to his house——"

"I am too much of the old school, madame," the doctor put in, "not to know what is due from a man to a person of your rank, and I am only too happy to think, from what Monsieur le Curé tells me, that I may be of some service to you."

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Madame de Portenduère, on whom the arrangement she had agreed to weighed so heavily, that, since the Abbé had quitted her, she had thought of applying rather to the notary, was so surprised by Minoret's delicate feeling, that she rose to return his bow, and pointed to an armchair.

"Be seated, monsieur," said she, with a royal air. "Our dear curé will have told you that the Vicomte is in prison for debt—a young man's debts—a hundred thousand francs. If you could lend him the sum, I would give you as security my farm at Bordières."

"We can talk of that, madame, when I shall have brought you back your son, if you will allow me to represent you in these circumstances."

"Very good, monsieur," replied the old lady, with a bow, and a glance at the curé, which was meant to convey: "You are right; he is a man of good breeding."

"My friend the doctor, as you see, madame, is full of devotion to your family."

"We shall be grateful to you, monsieur," said Madame de Portenduère, with a visible effort, "for at your age to venture through Paris on the tracks of a scapegrace's misdeeds——"

"Madame, in '65 I had the honor of seeing the illustrious Admiral de Portenduère at the house of the worthy Monsieur de Malesherbes, and at that of the Comte de Buffon, who was anxious to question him as to various curious facts in his voyages. It is not impossible that Monsieur de Portenduère, your late husband, may have been there too. The French navy was then in its glory; it held its own against England, and the Captain contributed his quota of courage to the game. How impatiently, in '83 and '84, did we await news from the camp of Saint-Roch! I was very near joining as surgeon to the King's forces. Your grand-uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, who is still living, fought his great battle at that time, for he was on board the *Belle Poule*."

"Ah! if he knew that his grand-nephew was in prison!"

"The Vicomte will no longer be there two days hence," said old Minoret, rising.

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He put out his hand to take the old lady's, who allowed him to do so; he kissed it respectfully, bowed low, and went out; but he came in again to say to the curé:

"Will you, my dear Abbé, secure a place for me in the diligence for to-morrow morning?"

The curé remained another half-hour to sing the praises of the doctor, who had intended to conquer the old lady, and had succeeded.

"He is wonderful for his age," said she. "He talks of going to Paris and settling my son's affairs as if he were no more than five-and-twenty. He has moved in good society."

"In the best, madame; and at this day, more than one son of an impoverished peer of France would be very happy to marry his ward with a million of francs. Ah, if such a notion should enter Savinien's brain, times are so altered that the chief difficulties would not be raised on your side after your son's conduct!"

It was the intense amazement with which the old lady heard this speech that allowed the priest to finish it.

"You have lost your wits, my dear Abbé Chaperon."

"Think over it, madame; and God grant that henceforth your son may behave in such a way as to acquire that old man's esteem!"

"If it were not you, Monsieur le Curé," said Madame de Portenduère; "if it were any one else who spoke to me in these terms——"

"You would never see him again," said the Abbé, smiling. "We must hope that your dear son may enlighten you as to what is doing in Paris in the matter of marriages. You will consider Savinien's happiness, and, after compromising his future, you will surely not interfere with his making himself a position."

"And it is you who say this to me!"

"If I did not, who would?" cried the priest, rising, and beating a prompt retreat.

The curé saw Ursule and her godfather walking up and down the little courtyard. The submissive doctor had been

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so teased by his ward that he had at last yielded; she wanted to go to Paris, and had found a thousand pretexts. He called the curé, who joined them, and the doctor begged him to engage the coupé of the diligence for that very night if the coach-office were still open.

At six o'clock on the following afternoon the old man and the young girl reached Paris, and the doctor went, the same evening, to consult his lawyer. Political events looked threatening. The Justice at Nemours had been telling the doctor the day before, several times in the course of their conversation, that he would be nothing less than mad to keep a penny in the funds so long as the quarrel between the Court and the Press should remain unsettled. Minoret's notary approved of the advice indirectly given by Bongrand. So the doctor took advantage of his visit to Paris to sell out his commercial investments and state securities, which were all at a premium, and to deposit his capital in the bank. The lawyer also advised his old client to sell the shares left to Ursule by Monsieur Jordy, which, as a good trustee, he had invested. He promised to set to work with the help of a very knowing agent, to come to terms with Savinien's creditors; but to achieve every success, it was necessary that the young man should spend yet a few days in prison.

"Hurrying on these matters costs at least fifteen per cent," said the lawyer to the doctor. "And at any rate you cannot get at your money for seven or eight days."

When Ursule learned that Savinien would be in prison at least a week longer, she entreated her guardian to let her go there with him, if only for once. Old Minoret refused. The uncle and niece were lodging at an hotel in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, where the doctor had taken a suitable set of rooms; and knowing his ward's religious honor, he made her promise never to go out while he was absent on business. The kind old man took her for walks about Paris, showing her the arcades, the shops, the Boulevards—but nothing interested or amused her.

"What do you want?" asked he.

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"To see Sainte-Pélagie," she persistently replied.

Then Minoret hired a hackney coach, and took her to the Rue de la Clef, where the vehicle drew up in front of the squalid building—an ancient convent turned into a prison. The sight of the high gray walls, where every window was closely barred, of the low door, not to be entered without stooping—dreadful lesson!—the gloomy mass standing in a neighborhood full of poverty, where it rises in the midst of deserted streets, itself the supreme misery; the whole combination of dismal ideas choked Ursule, and made her shed tears.

"How is it," said she, "that young men can be imprisoned for money? How is it that a debt gives to a money-lender such power as the King himself does not possess?—And *he* is there!" she exclaimed. "Where, godfather?" she added, looking from one window to another.

"Ursule," said her godfather, "you make me commit follies. This is not forgetting him!"

"But," said she, "even if I must give him up, must I feel no interest in him? I may love him, and marry no one."

"Oh!" cried the old man, "there is so much method in your madness, that I repent of having brought you."

Three days later the old man had the receipts in due form, the title-deeds, and all the documents which were necessary to liberate Savinien. The liquidation, including the agent's commission, had been effected for the sum of eighty thousand francs. The doctor had in hand eight hundred thousand francs, which, by his lawyer's advice, he placed in treasury notes, so as not to lose too much interest. He kept twenty thousand in bank notes for Savinien.

The doctor himself went to release him on Saturday at two o'clock, and the young Vicomte, already informed by a letter from his mother, thanked his deliverer with sincere effusiveness of feeling.

"You must not delay in coming home to see your mother," said old Minoret.

Savinien replied, in some confusion, that even in prison he

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had contracted a debt of honor; and he told the doctor of the visit of his three friends.

"I suspected that you might have some personal debts," said the doctor with a smile. "Your mother has borrowed a hundred thousand francs, but I have paid no more than eighty thousand; here is the remainder, use it with thrift, monsieur, and regard what is left as your stake on the green cloth of fortune."

During the past week Savinien had reflected on the times he lived in. Competition on all sides demands severe labor from those who hope to make a fortune. Illegal methods require more talent and underhand manœuvres, than enterprise under the light of day. Success in the gay world, far from securing a position, absorbs time and a great deal of money. The name of Portenduère, omnipotent according to his mother, was nothing in Paris. His cousin the deputy, the Comte de Portenduère, cut but a small figure in the midst of the elective Chamber in comparison with the Peerage and Court, and had no more influence than enough for himself. Admiral Kergarouët existed only in the person of his wife. He had seen orators, men who had risen from a social rank beneath the nobility or the simple gentry, become personages of importance. In short, money was the pivot, the only means, the only motor of a society which Louis XVIII. had tried to form in imitation of that of England.

On his way from the Rue de la Clef to the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, the young gentleman summed up his meditations, and laid them before the old doctor, in accordance with de Marsay's advice.

"I must let myself be forgotten," said he, "for three or four years, and try to find a career. Perhaps I may make a name in political diplomacy or in moral statistics, by some treatise on one of the questions of the day. At any rate, while finding some young person whom I may marry, and whose position may qualify me for election, I shall work in silence and obscurity."

The doctor studied the young man's countenance, and saw

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in it the fixed purpose of a man who, having been wounded, hopes for revenge. He greatly approved this scheme.

"My young neighbor," said he, "if you have cast the skin of the old nobility—which is not found to be good wear nowadays—after three or four years of a steady industrious life, I will undertake to find you a superior girl, pretty, amiable, pious, and with a fortune of seven or eight hundred thousand francs, who will make you happy, and of whom you may be proud, though she has no nobility but that of the heart."

"Eh, doctor!" cried the young man, "there is no nobility left—only an aristocracy."

"Go and pay your debts of honor, and return here. I will go to engage the coupé of the diligence, for my ward is with me," said the old man.

That evening, at six o'clock, the three travelers set out from the Rue Dauphine by the "Ducler." Ursule, who wore a veil, spoke not a word. After blowing her the kiss in an impulse of trivial flirtation, which had upset Ursule as much as a whole book of love, Savinien had totally forgotten the doctor's ward in the torments of his debts; and, indeed, his hopeless adoration of Emilie de Kergarouët did not suffer him to bestow a remembrance on the glances he had interchanged with a mere little girl at Nemours. So he did not recognize her when the old man made her get first into the coach and sat next her, dividing her from the young Vicomte.

"I have accounts to settle with you," said the doctor to the youth; "I have all your papers here."

"I was within an ace of not getting away," said Savinien. "I had to order clothes and linen; the Philistines have robbed me of everything, and I am in the state of the prodigal son."

However interesting the subjects of conversation between the old man and the young one, however pertinent some of Savinien's remarks, the young girl sat in silence till it was dark, her green veil hiding her face, and her hands folded over her shawl.

"You do not seem to have found Paris very delightful, mademoiselle," said Savinien at last, somewhat piqued.

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"I am glad to return to Nemours," she replied in an agitated voice, putting up her veil.

In spite of the gloom, Savinien now recognized her by her thick plaits of hair and brilliant blue eyes.

"And, for my part, I can leave Paris without regret to bury myself at Nemours, since I shall there find so fair a neighbor," said he. "I hope, Monsieur le Docteur, that you will allow me to visit you; I am fond of music, and I remember hearing Mademoiselle Ursule's piano."

"I hardly know, monsieur," said the doctor gravely, "whether your mother will be pleased that you should come to see an old man who is obliged to have a mother's care of this dear child."

This measured reply gave Savinien much to think about; he now recollected that kiss, so lightly wafted.

It was now night; the heat was oppressive; the doctor and Savinien were the first to fall asleep. Ursule, who remained a long time awake, her head full of plans, succumbed about midnight. She had taken off her little hat of coarse straw plait. Her head, in a little cap of embroidered muslin, presently dropped on to her godfather's shoulder. At daybreak, near Bouron, Savinien woke the first. He saw Ursule in the untidy state produced by the jolting of the coach; her cap was tumbled and askew; her hair had come unpinned, and the plaits fell about her face, which was rosy with the heat; but in this disorder, which is horrible in a woman to whom dress is indispensable, youth and beauty are triumphant. The sleep of innocence is always lovely. Her parted lips showed pretty teeth; her shawl, thrown back, allowed him to observe, without offence to Ursule, the grace of her figure under the folds of a full bodice of flowered muslin. And through the countenance shone the purity of the maiden soul, all the more visible because no other expression mingled with it. Old Minoret, who presently awoke, arranged her head against the corner of the coach to make her more comfortable; and she did not even feel what he did, so soundly was she

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sleeping, after spending so many nights in thinking of Savinien's misfortunes.

"Poor little thing!" said he to his companion, "she sleeps like a child—as she is."

"You should be proud of her," said Savinien, "for she seems to be as good as she is pretty."

"Ah! she is the light of the house! If she were my daughter, I could not love her better. She will be sixteen on the 5th February next. God grant I may live to see her married to a man who will make her happy! I wanted to take her to the play in Paris, where she had never been before; she would not go; the curé at Nemours had forbidden it. 'But,' said I, 'when you are married, if your husband wishes to take you?'—'I shall do whatever my husband desires,' said she. 'If he should ask me to do anything wrong, and I should be so weak as to obey him, he will be held responsible before God; but I should find strength to resist—in his interest, of course.'"

As they reached Nemours, at five in the morning, Ursule woke up, quite ashamed of her untidiness, and of meeting Savinien's gaze of frank admiration. During the hour which the diligence took to drive from Bouron, where it had stopped a few minutes, the young man had fallen in love with Ursule. He had studied the innocence of her soul, the beauty of her person, the whiteness of her complexion, the delicacy of her features, and the sweet voice which had spoken the brief expressive phrase in which the poor child had told everything while intending to tell nothing. In short, I know not what presentiment led him to think of Ursule as the wife the doctor had suggested to him, set in a gold frame by the magical words: "Seven or eight hundred thousand francs."

"In three or four years she will be twenty; I shall be twenty-seven. The good man spoke of struggles, of work, of good behavior. However cunning he may be, he will end by telling me his secret."

The neighbors parted before their respective houses, and Savinien put much meaning into his leave-taking, with a glance at Ursule full of imploring invitation.

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Madame de Portenduère left her son to sleep till noon. The doctor and Ursule, in spite of their fatiguing journey, went to high mass.

Savinien's release, and his return in the doctor's company, had explained the object of his journey to the parochial politicians and to his heirs, who had met in council in the Church Square, as they had done a fortnight since. To the great surprise of all parties, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère stopped old Minoret, who offered her his arm, and conducted her home. The old lady wished to invite him and his ward to dinner that same day, telling him that the curé would be her other guest.

"He wanted to let Ursule see Paris," said Minoret-Levrault.

"Damnation! The old man cannot stir a step without his little housekeeper," cried Crémière.

"There must have been some very private transactions between them, for Mother Portenduère to take his arm," observed Massin.

"It has not occurred to you that your uncle has sold his investments and taken the young 'un out of quod!" cried Goupil. "He refused my master, but he did not refuse his madame. . . . Ah! your goose is cooked! The Vicomte will propose a marriage-contract instead of a promise to pay, and the doctor will make the husband settle on his god-daughter all the money he will have to give her to secure such a match."

"It would not be such a bad stroke of business to marry Ursule to Monsieur Savinien," said the butcher. "The old lady is having them to dine with her to-day; Tiennette came over to me at five in the morning to secure a fillet of beef."

"Well, Dionis, this is a pretty piece of work!" said Massin, hurrying to meet the notary, who came out on to the Square.

"Why, what's wrong?" said the notary. "All is well; your uncle has sold his securities, and Madame de Portenduère has asked me to go to her house to witness a deed acknowledging a loan of a hundred thousand francs from your uncle on a mortgage of her estates."

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"Yes; but if the young folks were to marry each other?"

"You might as well say if Goupil were to be my successor," said the notary.

"Neither case is impossible," said Goupil.

On returning from mass, the old lady sent Tiennette to desire her son to come to her room.

The little house had three rooms on the ground floor. Those of Madame de Portenduère and of her deceased husband were on the same side of the house, divided by a dressing-room with a borrowed light, and a small ante-room opening on to the stairs. The window of the third room, which had always been Savinien's, looked out on the street, as did that of his father's. The staircase lay behind it in such a way as to leave space for a little dressing-room adjoining, with a small round window to the courtyard.

Madame de Portenduère's room, the gloomiest in the house, also looked on the yard; but the widow spent her life in the sitting-room on the ground floor, which communicated by a passage with the kitchen built on the further side of the courtyard; so that this room did duty both as drawing-room and dining-room.

The room that had been Monsieur de Portenduère's remained in the state in which it had been left on the day of his death; the dead man alone was missing. Madame de Portenduère herself had made the bed, and laid upon it the captain's uniform, with her husband's sword, red ribbon, orders, and hat. The gold snuff-box out of which the Vicomte had taken his last pinch of snuff was on the table by the bed, with his prayer-book, his watch, and the cup he used to drink out of. His white hair, arranged in a frame in a single thick curl, hung above the crucifix and holy water cup over the bed. Finally, the trifling objects of his daily use were all in their place—his papers, furniture, Dutch spittoon, and field-glass hanging over the fireplace. The widow had stopped the antique clock at the hour of his death, which it thus recorded in perpetuity. The scent of his powder and snuff still hung

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in the air. The hearth was as he had left it. To go into the room was like seeing him again, on finding all the things that thus spoke of his habits. His tall cane with its gold knob still lay where he had left it, and his large doeskin gloves close beside it. On the console stood a vase of solid gold, coarsely executed, but worth a thousand crowns, a present from the port of Havana, which he had protected during the war of American Independence from an attack of the English, holding his own against a superior force, after getting the vessels under his convoy safe into harbor. As a reward the King of Spain had made him Knight of the Spanish Orders. For this achievement he was promoted on the first opportunity to the command of a squadron, and received the order of the Legion of Honor.

Then, on his next leave, he married his wife, with a fortune of two hundred thousand francs. But the Revolution stopped all further promotion, and Monsieur de Portenduère emigrated.

"Where is my mother?" asked Savinien of Tiennette.

"She is waiting for you in your father's room," said the old Bretonne.

Savinien could not repress a little shudder. He knew how rigid were his mother's principles, her worship of honor, her loyalty, her faith in noble blood, and he foresaw a scene. So he went as if to lead a forlorn hope, his heart beating and his face almost pallid. In the twilight that filtered through the Venetian shutters he saw his mother dressed in black, and wearing a solemn mien in harmony with this chamber of the dead.

"Monsieur le Vicomte," she said, rising as he entered, and taking his hand to lead him to the bedside, "there your father died—a man of honor; died without having anything to reproach himself with. His spirit is above. He must indeed have groaned there to see his son disgraced by imprisonment for debt. Under the old monarchy you would have been spared this mud-stain, by craving a *lettre de cachet,* by which you would have been shut up for a few days in a State prison.

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—However, you now stand before your father, who can hear you. You, knowing all you had done before being taken to that squalid prison, can you swear to me, before that Shade, and before God who sees all things, that you have done no dishonorable action, that your debts were the consequence of a young man's follies—in short, that your honor is unspotted? If your blameless father were there, alive, in that armchair, if he could call you to account for your conduct, would he, after hearing you, embrace you still?"

"Yes, mother," said the young man, with the most respectful gravity.

She opened her arms and clasped her son to her heart, shedding a few tears.

"Then let all be forgotten," said she; "we have lost nothing but the money. I will pray to God that it may be restored to us; and since you still are worthy of your name, kiss me, for I have suffered greatly."

"I swear to you, my dear mother," said he, holding out his hand over the bed, "never again to give you the least trouble of the same kind, and to do all in my power to repair my past errors."

"Come to breakfast, my child," she said, and she left the room.

If the laws of the stage are to be applied to narrative, Savinien's arrival, by introducing at Nemours the only actor as yet missing from the personages of this little drama, here completes the prologue.

PART II

THE MINORET PROPERTY

THE action began with a scene so hackneyed in literature, whether old or new, that no one would believe in its effect in 1829 if the principal figure were not an old lady of Brit-

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tany, a Kergarouët and an *émigrée*. But it must at once be made clear that in 1829 the nobility had reconquered in society some of the ground it had lost in political influence. Moreover, the feeling which governs grandparents when matrimonial suitability is in question, is imperishable; it is closely implicated with the existence of civilized society, and founded in family spirit. It is supreme at Geneva as at Vienna, and as at Nemours, where Zélie Levrault had refused her consent to her son's marrying the daughter of a bastard.

Still, every social law has its exceptions. Savinien proposed trying to bend his mother's pride before Ursule's innate nobility. The battle began forthwith. As soon as he was seated at table his mother began to tell him of the dreadful letters, as she called them, written to her by the Kergarouëts and the Portenduères.

"The Family has ceased to exist, my dear mother," replied Savinien. "Nothing is left but the Individual. The nobility no longer form a compact body. Nowadays no one asks if you are a Portenduère, or if you are brave, or a statesman; all that any one requires is, How much do you pay in rates and taxes?"

"And the King?" asked the old lady.

"The King stands between the two Chambers, like a man between his lawful wife and his mistress. So I must contrive to marry some rich girl whatever her family may be—a peasant's daughter if she has a million of francs, and if she is fairly well brought up, that is to say, if she comes from a convent-school."

"This is quite another matter!" said the old lady.

Savinien knit his brows over this reply. He knew that granite will, called Breton obstinacy, which characterized his mother; and was anxious to know, as soon as possible, what her views were on this delicate subject.

"And so," said he, "if I should fall in love with a girl—say, for instance, our neighbor's ward, little Ursule—you would oppose my marrying her?"

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"To my dying day," said she. "After my death you alone will be responsible for the honor and the blood of the Portenduères and the Kergarouëts."

"Then you would leave me to die of hunger and despair for the sake of a chimera which, in these days, can only become real by acquiring the splendor of wealth."

"You can serve France and trust in God."

"You will postpone my happiness till the day after your death."

"It will be horrible on your part, that is all."

"Louis XIV. was very near marrying Mazarin's niece—a parvenu."

"Mazarin himself opposed it."

"And the widow Scarron?"

"She was a d'Aubigné! Besides, the marriage was secret. But I am a very old woman, my son," she added, shaking her head. "When I am gone, you can marry to please your own fancy."

Savinien loved and respected his mother; but at once, though in silence, he set against the obstinacy of the daughter of the Kergarouëts, an obstinacy equal to her own, and determined never to have any wife but Ursule, to whom this opposition gave all the charm of a forbidden joy—as always happens in such cases.

When, after vespers, Doctor Minoret, with Ursule, dressed in pink and white, entered the chill sitting-room, the poor child was seized with nervous trembling, just as if she had found herself in the presence of the Queen of France, and had some favor to ask of her. Since her talk with the doctor, the little house had assumed, to her, the proportions of a palace, and the old lady all the social importance that a duchess must have had in the eyes of a villein's daughter in the Middle Ages. Never had Ursule measured more hopelessly the distance which divided a Vicomte de Portenduère from the daughter of a bandmaster, a singer in the opera, the natural son of an organist, herself living on the bounty of a physician.

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"What ails you, child?" said the lady, making her sit down by her side.

"Madame, I am overcome by the honor you condescend to pay me."

"Why, child," replied Madame de Portenduère in her most vinegar accent, "I know how much your guardian loves you, and I wish to do what is agreeable to him, for he has brought home the prodigal son."

"But, my dear mother," said Savinien, for it went to his heart to see Ursule's deep blushes, and the terrible effort by which she repressed her tears, "even if you were under no obligation to Monsieur Minoret, it seems to me we might be gratified by the pleasure mademoiselle is good enough to do us by accepting your invitation." And the young man pressed the doctor's hand with meaning as he added:

"You, monsieur, wear the order of Saint-Michael, the oldest French order, which in itself confers nobility."

Ursule's great beauty, to which her almost hopeless love had, within the last few days, given the depth of expression which the greatest painters have always stamped on those portraits in which the soul is made strongly visible, had suddenly struck Madame de Portenduère, and led her to suspect some ambitious interest under the doctor's generosity. And the speech to which Savinien had replied was uttered with a pointedness that wounded the old man in what was dearest to him. Still, he could not forbear from smiling as he heard himself addressed as "Chevalier" by Savinien, and discerned in this audacious exaggeration a lover's fearlessness of the ridiculous.

"The Order of Saint-Michael, to obtain which so many follies were committed of old, is fallen, Monsieur le Vicomte," replied the old Court physician. "Fallen like so many other privileges! It is no longer bestowed on any but doctors and poor artists. And so kings have done well to unite it to that of Saint-Lazarus, a saint who was, I believe, an unhappy wretch brought back to life by a miracle! Viewed in this light, the Order of Saint-Michael and Saint-Lazarus to us may be symbolical."

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After this reply, full of irony and dignity, silence reigned, no one caring to break it; and it was becoming uncomfortable, when a knock was heard.

"Here is our good curé," said the old lady, rising, and leaving Ursule to herself, while she went forward to receive the priest—an honor she had not paid to Ursule or the doctor.

Minoret smiled as he looked from his ward to Savinien. To complain or to take offence at Madame de Portenduère's bad manners was a rock on which a small mind might have run aground; but the old man had too much breeding not to avoid it. He began talking to the Vicomte of the danger Charles X. was in at that time, after intrusting the direction of his policy to the Prince de Polignac. When a long enough time had elapsed to obviate any appearance of retaliation on the old lady by speaking of business matters, he handed to her, almost jestingly, the documents of the prosecution and the receipted bills which proved the accounts drawn up by the lawyer.

"My son acknowledges them?" she asked with a glance at Savinien, who bowed in reply. "Well, then, they can be handed to Dionis," and she pushed away the papers, treating the affair with the contempt due in her eyes to money matters.

To look down on wealth was, in Madame de Portenduère's opinion, to enhance nobility, and leave the middle class without a foot to stand on.

A few minutes later Goupil called on behalf of his master, to ask for the accounts as between Savinien and Monsieur Minoret.

"And what for?" asked the old lady.

"To serve as a basis for the mortgage deed; there is no direct payment of money," replied the clerk, looking insolently about him.

Ursule and Savinien, who looked in this odious person's face for the first time, felt such a sensation as is produced by a toad, aggravated by a sense of ill omen. They both had that indefinable and vague anticipation of the future which

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has no name in speech, but which might be accounted for by an impulse of that inner self of which the Swedenborgian had spoken to Doctor Minoret. A conviction that this venomous Goupil would be fatal to them made Ursule quake; but she got over her agitation as she perceived with unspeakable joy that Savinien shared her feelings.

"Monsieur Dionis' clerk is not a handsome man," said Savinien, when Goupil had shut the door.

"What can it matter whether people of that class are ugly or handsome?" said Madame de Portenduère.

"I have no objection to his ugliness," said the curé, "but only to his malignity, which is unbounded, and he adds to it by villainy."

In spite of his wish to be amiable, the doctor grew cold and dignified, the lovers were uncomfortable. But for the simple good humor of the Abbé Chaperon, whose gentle cheerfulness made the dinner lively, the position of the doctor and his ward would have been almost intolerable.

At dessert, seeing Ursule turn pale, he said to her, "If you do not feel well, my child, there is only the street to cross."

"What ails you, my dear?" said the old lady to the girl.

"Unfortunately, madame," said the doctor severely, "her soul feels chilled, accustomed as she is to see nothing but smiles."

"A bad education, monsieur," said Madame de Portenduère. "Do not you think so, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Yes, madame," Minoret put in, with a glance at the curé, who could not say a word. "I have, I see, made life impossible to this seraphic nature if she were to be cast on the world; but before I die, I will find means to protect her from coldness, indifference, and hatred——"

"Godfather! I beg of you—that is enough. I feel nothing unpleasant here," she said, ready to meet Madame de Portenduère's eye rather than lend too much meaning to her words by looking at Savinien.

"Whether Mademoiselle Ursule is uncomfortable I know not, madame," said Savinien to his mother, "but I know that you are torturing me."

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On hearing this speech, wrung from the generous young man by his mother's behavior, Ursule turned pale; she begged Madame de Portenduère to excuse her, rose, took her guardian's arm, courtesied, and went out. Then, as soon as she was at home, she rushed into the drawing-room, and sitting down by the piano, hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Why will you not leave it to my long experience to guide your feelings, cruel child?" cried the doctor in despair. "The nobility never think themselves under any obligation towards us of the middle class. In serving them, we do no more than our duty, that is all. Besides, the old lady perceived that Savinien looked at you with pleasure; she is afraid lest he should fall in love with you."

"At any rate, he is safe!" she said. "But to try to set down such a man as you are——!"

"Wait till I come back, my child."

When the doctor returned to Madame de Portenduère's he found Dionis there, and with him Monsieur Bongrand, and Levrault the mayor, the witnesses required by law to give validity to acts drawn up in communes where there is no official above a notary. Minoret led Dionis aside and spoke a word in his ear, after which the notary read the deed of mortgage; Madame de Portenduère pledged all her property until the hundred thousand francs lent by the doctor to the Vicomte should be repaid, with the interest, calculated at five per cent. When reading this clause, the curé looked at Minoret, who answered the Abbé by an approving nod. The good priest went to speak a few words to the lady in a low voice, and she replied quite audibly:

"I do not choose to owe anything to people of that kind."

"My mother leaves the pleasantest part to me," said Savinien to the doctor. "She will pay you all the money, and leave it to me to be grateful."

"But you will have to find eleven thousand francs the first year," observed the curé, "to pay the law costs."

"Monsieur," said Minoret to Dionis, "as Monsieur and

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Madame de Portenduère are not in a position to pay for the registration, add the costs to the capital sum, and I will pay them."

Dionis made some calculations, and the whole sum was fixed at a hundred and seven thousand francs. When all the documents were signed, Minoret pleaded fatigue, and withdrew at the same time as the notary and the witnesses.

"Madame," said the Abbé, who remained with the Vicomte, "why affront that excellent Minoret, who has saved you at least twenty-five thousand francs in Paris, and who had the good feeling to leave twenty thousand in your son's hands for his debts of honor?"

"Your Minoret is a sly fox," said she, taking a pinch of snuff. "He knows very well what he is about."

"My mother fancies that he wants to force me to marry his ward by swallowing up our farm, as if a Portenduère and the son of a Kergarouët could be made to marry against his will."

An hour later Savinien made his appearance at the doctor's, where the heirs had come together, moved by curiosity. The arrival of the young Vicomte produced a great sensation, all the more because in each person it proceeded from a different emotion. Mesdemoiselles Crémière and Massin whispered together, and stared at Ursule, who blushed. The mothers murmured to Désiré that Goupil was very likely in the right as regarded the marriage. The eyes of all were then centered on the doctor, who did not rise to greet the young nobleman, but merely gave him a curt bow, without setting down his dice-box, for he was playing backgammon with Monsieur Bongrand. The doctor's cold manner surprised them all.

"Ursule, my dear," he said, "give us a little music."

The young girl was only too happy to have some occupation; and on seeing her hurry to the piano and turn over the green-bound volumes, the expectant heirs resigned themselves with expressions of pleasure to the torment and silence about to be inflicted on them, so eager were they to detect what was going on between their uncle and the Portenduères.

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It happens not unfrequently that a piece, poor enough in itself, but played by a young girl under the stress of deep feeling, may produce more impression than a grand overture pompously given by a fine orchestra. In all music there lies, besides the idea of the composer, the soul of the performer, who, by a privilege peculiar to this art alone, can lend purpose and poetry to phrases of no great intrinsic value. Chopin, in our day, proves the truth of this fact on the piano, a thankless instrument, as Paganini had already done on the violin. This great genius is not so much a musician as a soul, which becomes incarnate, and which could express itself in any form of music, even in simple chords.

Ursule, by her exquisite and perilous organization, belonged to this school of rare genius; but old Schmucke, the master who came to her every Saturday, and who, during her stay in Paris, had gone to her every day, had developed his pupil's gifts to the utmost perfection. "Rousseau's Dream," the piece Ursule now selected, one of Hérold's youthful compositions, is not lacking in a certain fulness which the player can bring out; Ursule gave it a variety of agitated feeling which justified the title of *Caprice,* which the fragment bears. By her playing, at once mellifluous and dreamy, her soul spoke to the soul of the young man, and wrapped him, as it were, in a cloud of almost visible thoughts. He, seated at the end of the piano, his elbow resting on the top, and his head supported by his left hand, gazed in admiration at Ursule, whose eyes, fixed on the wainscot beyond, seemed to be questioning some mystic world. A man might have fallen desperately in love for less.

True feelings have a magnetic power, and Ursule intended to reveal her soul to some extent, as a coquette dresses herself to attract. Savinien was admitted to that beautiful realm, carried away by her heart, which, in order to express itself, borrowed the power of the only art which speaks to the mind through the mind, without the aid of words, of color, or of form. Candor has the same power over men as childhood has, the same charms and irresistible attractions; and

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Ursule had never been more candid than at this moment, when she was waking to a new life.

The curé came to snatch the young man from his dreams by asking him to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule went on playing; the heirs left, with the exception of Désiré, who remained to investigate the intentions of his uncle, of the Vicomte, and of Ursule.

"You have as much talent as feeling, mademoiselle," said Savinien, when the young girl closed the piano, and came to sit down by her godfather. "Who is your master?"

"A German who lives quite close to the Rue Dauphine, on the Quai-Conti," said the doctor. "If he had not been giving Ursule a lesson every day during our stay in Paris, he would have been here this morning."

"He is not only a great musician," said Ursule, "but a man of the most adorable simplicity."

"Such lessons must cost very dear!" cried Désiré.

The players exchanged ironical glances. When the game was ended, the doctor, who had been thoughtful all the evening, turned to Savinien with the expression of a man grieved to fulfil a painful duty.

"Monsieur," he said, "I am much gratified by the feeling which has prompted you to call on me so immediately; but your mother ascribes to me a double purpose of an ignoble kind, and I should give her the right to do so if I did not beg of you to come here no more, in spite of the honor your visits do me, and the pleasure I should take in cultivating your society. My honor and my peace of mind require that we should give up all neighborly intercourse. Pray tell your mother that if I do not request her to honor us—my ward and myself—by dining with us next Sunday, it is because I am perfectly certain that on that day she would be indisposed."

The old man offered his hand to the Vicomte, who pressed it respectfully, and merely said, "You are right, monsieur."

He went away, not without bowing to Ursule with an expression of regret rather than of disappointment. Désiré left

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the room at the same moment, but he could not speak a word with him, for Savinien rushed home.

For two days the coolness between the Portenduères and the doctor was the sole object of conversation among the heritors, who did justice to the acumen of Dionis, and believed that the inheritance was safe. And thus, in an age when ranks are leveled, when the mania for equality puts all individuals on the same footing, and threatens every institution, even military discipline—the last entrenchment of power in France; when, consequently, passion finds no obstacles to be overcome, but personal antipathies or inequality of fortune, the obstinacy of an old woman and the dignity of Doctor Minoret had raised between these two lovers barriers which, as usual, were fated to strengthen rather than to destroy their love. To an impassioned man a woman is worth just what she costs him; now, Savinien, foreseeing a struggle, efforts, and suspense, which already made the young girl precious to him, was determined to win her. Perhaps our feelings obey the law of nature as to the duration of all her creations—a long life has a long childhood.

Next morning, on waking, Ursule and Savinien had the same idea. This community of feeling would give birth to love if it were not the most delightful proof of its existence. When the young girl opened her curtains a little way, so as to give her eyes exactly space enough to look across to Savinien's room, she saw her lover's face above the window-fastening opposite. When we remember the immense service done to lovers by windows, it seems quite natural that they should be taxed. After thus protesting against her godfather's hard-heartedness, Ursule let the curtains fall to again, and opened the window to close the venetians, through which she could see without being seen. She went up to her room at least seven or eight times in the course of the day, and always saw the young Vicomte writing, tearing up papers, and writing again—to her, no doubt!

Next morning, when La Bougival woke Ursule, she handed her the following letter:

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"To Mademoiselle Ursule.

"MADEMOISELLE,—I am under no misapprehension as to the suspicion of which a young man must be the object when he has placed himself in the position from which your guardian rescued me. I henceforth must offer better guarantees than another man; hence, mademoiselle, it is with the greatest humility that I throw myself at your feet to avow my love. This declaration is not prompted by passion; it is based on a certainty which will last my life through. A mad passion for my young aunt Madame de Kergarouët brought me to imprisonment; will you not regard as a mark of the sincerest love the complete effacement of every memory, the substitution for that image in my heart of your own? From the moment when I saw you asleep, and so lovely in your childlike slumbers, at Bouron, you have filled my soul as a queen holds possession of her realm. I will have no wife but you. You have every perfection I can look for in the woman who is to bear my name. The education you have received, and the dignity of your soul, qualify you for the highest position. But I am too diffident of myself to attempt to paint you to yourself; I can only love you. After hearing you play last night, I remembered these lines, which seem to have been written on you:

"'Made to attract the heart and charm the eye, at once gentle and intellectual, witty and reasonable, as polished as though she had spent her life at courts, as simple as the recluse who has never seen the world, the fire of her soul is tempered in her eyes by divine modesty.'

"I have felt the value of the beautiful soul which reveals itself in you by the smallest things. This is what gives me the courage to ask you—if as yet you love no one—to allow me to prove to you, by my care and my conduct, that I am worthy of you. My life depends on it; you cannot doubt that all my powers shall be employed not merely to please you, but yet more to merit your esteem, which will to me outweigh that of all the rest of the world. In this hope, Ursule, if you will permit me so to name you in my heart

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as one I worship, Nemours will be my paradise, and the most difficult undertakings will only bring me joys which I shall lay at your feet, as we lay all at the throne of God. Tell me, then, that I may call myself YOUR SAVINIEN."

Ursule kissed this letter; then, after reading it again, and clasping it with rapturous gestures, she dressed to go and show it to her godfather.

"Gracious Heaven! I was on the point of going without saying my prayers!" she exclaimed, turning back and kneeling down on her *prie-Dieu.*

A few minutes later she went down to the garden, where she found her guardian, to whom she gave Savinien's letter to read. They sat together on a bench under the clump of creepers facing the Chinese pavilion. Ursule waited for the old man to speak, and he sat meditating much too long a time for an impatient girl. Finally, the outcome of their secret conference was the following letter, which the doctor had no doubt dictated in part:

"MONSIEUR,—I cannot fail to be much honored by the letter in which you offer me your hand; but at my age, and in accordance with the rules I have been brought up in, I had to lay it before my guardian, who constitutes my whole family, and whom I love as both a father and a friend. These, then, are the painful objections he has raised, and which must serve as my reply:

"I, Monsieur le Comte, am but a poor girl, whose future fortune depends entirely not only on my godfather's good-will, but also on the doubtful issue of the measures he can take to evade the ill-will towards me of his next of kin. Though I am the legitimate child of Joseph Mirouët, band-master to the 45th infantry regiment, as he was my guardian's illegitimate half-brother, a suit, however unreasonable, may be brought against a young girl, who will then be defenceless. You see, monsieur, that my slender prospects are not

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the worst of my misfortunes. I have many reasons for humility. It is for your sake, and not for my own, that I lay before you these considerations, which often weigh but lightly on loving and devoted hearts. But you must take into consideration the fact that if I did not represent them to you, I might be suspected of wishing to induce your affection to overlook obstacles which the world, and, above all, your mother, would think insurmountable. In four months I shall be sixteen. You will perhaps acknowledge that we are, both of us, too young and too inexperienced to struggle with the penury of a life begun on no fortune but what I possess through the kindness of the late Monsieur de Jordy. Besides, my guardian wishes that I should not marry before the age of twenty. Who can tell what fate may have in store for you during these four years, the best of your life? Do not spoil it for the sake of a poor girl.

"Having thus explained to you, monsieur, the reasons given by my dear guardian, who, far from opposing my happiness, desires to contribute to it with all his power, and who hopes to see his protection—which will soon be but feeble—replaced by an affection equal to his own, it only remains for me to say how deeply I am touched by your offer and the warm compliments you have added to it. The prudence which dictates this answer is that of an old man who knows life well; but the gratitude I must express is that of a young girl whose soul no other emotion has as yet entered.

"I can therefore in all truth sign myself your faithful servant, URSULE MIROUËT."

Savinien did not reply. Was he trying to influence his mother? Had her letter extinguished his love? A thousand such questions, all unanswerable, tortured Ursule, and by reflex action the doctor, too, for he suffered under the slightest agitation that disturbed his dear child. Ursule often went up to her room and looked across at Savinien, whom she could see seated at his table, deep in thought, and often turning to glance at her windows. It was not till the end of the

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week that she received this letter from Savinien, whose delay was explained by an increase of his love:

"To Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët.

"DEAR URSULE,—There is something of the Breton in me, and when once I have made up my mind, nothing can make me alter it. Your guardian—whom may God long preserve! —is perfectly right. But am I to blame, then, for loving you? And all I ask is to know whether you love me. Tell me, if only by a sign, and then these four years will indeed be the best of my life!

"A friend of mine has conveyed to my uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, a letter, in which I asked his influence to get me into the navy. The kind old man, touched by my mishaps, has answered that the King's nomination would be contrary to rule if I wished to take rank. However, after three months of study at Toulon, the minister can place me in a ship as foreman of the steerage; then, after a cruise against Algiers, with whom we are at war, I can pass an examination and become a naval cadet. If I should distinguish myself in the expedition to be sent against Algiers, I should certainly be made sub-lieutenant; but how soon? No one can tell. But, at any rate, the regulations will be made as elastic as possible to reinstate the name of Portenduère on the navy-list.

"I can win you only through your guardian, I see, and your respect for him makes you the dearer to my heart. So, before replying, I will seek an interview with him; on his answer my whole future must depend. Come what may, believe me that, rich or poor, the daughter of a bandmaster or of a king, you are to me her whom the voice of my heart has chosen.

"Dear Ursule, we live at a time when prejudice, which of old would have parted us, has no longer power enough to hinder our marriage. All the feelings of my heart are yours, and to your uncle I will give such guarantees as may assure him of your happiness. He does not know that I

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have loved you more in a few minutes than he has loved you in fifteen years!—Till this evening."

"See here, godfather!" said Ursule, holding out the letter with an impulse of pride.

"Ah! my child," cried the doctor, after reading the letter, "I am more glad than you are. By this determination the Vicomte has made up for all his misdeeds."

After dinner, Savinien called upon the doctor, who was just then walking with Ursule by the balustrade of the river-terrace. The Vicomte had received his clothes from Paris, and the lover had not omitted to enhance his personal advantages by dressing as carefully, as elegantly, as though it were to charm the handsome and haughty Comtesse de Kergarouët. On seeing him advance from the outside steps, the poor child clung to her uncle's arm exactly as if she were trying to save herself from falling into an abyss, and the doctor heard the deep, hollow throbbing of her heart; it made him shudder.

"Leave us, my child," he said to his ward, who went to sit down on the steps of the pavilion, after suffering Savinien to take her hand and kiss it respectfully.

"Monsieur, will you give that dear creature to a ship's captain?" said the young Vicomte to the doctor in a low voice.

"No," said Minoret with a smile, "we might have too long to wait, but—to a ship's lieutenant."

Tears of joy stood in the young man's eyes, and he grasped the old man's hand very warmly.

"Then I shall go," he said, "to study, and try to learn in six months what the pupils of the naval college learn in six years."

"Go?" cried Ursule, flying towards them from the steps.

"Yes, mademoiselle, to deserve you. So, the more haste I put into it, the more affection I shall show for you."

"To-day is the 3rd of October," said she, looking at him with infinite tenderness. "Start after the 19th."

"Yes," said the old man; "we will keep the feast of Saint-Savinien."

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"Then, good-bye," exclaimed the youth. "I must spend this week in Paris to take the preliminary steps, make my preparations, and buy the books and the mathematical instruments I need; to make my way, too, in the minister's good graces, and win the most favorable conditions possible."

Ursule and her godfather went with Savinien to the gate. After seeing him go into his mother's house, they saw him come out again, followed by Tiennette, carrying a little portmanteau.

"Why, if you are rich, do you compel him to serve in the navy?" said Ursule to the doctor.

"I believe you will soon think it was I who contracted his debts!" said her uncle, smiling. "I do not compel him.—But, my darling, a uniform and the Cross of the Legion of Honor won in battle will wipe out many a smirch. In four years he may rise to command a ship, and that is all I ask of him."

"But he may be killed," she said, showing the doctor a white face.

"Lovers, like drunkards, have a Providence of their own," replied the doctor lightly.

The poor child, unknown to her godfather, cut off at night enough of her beautiful long fair hair to make a chain; then, two days later, she persuaded her music-master, old Schmucke, to promise that he would see that the hair was not changed, and that the chain should be finished for the following Sunday.

On Savinien's return, he informed the doctor and his ward that he had signed his papers; he was to be at Brest by the 25th. As the doctor invited him to dinner on the 18th, he spent almost the whole of two days at his house; and in spite of the most prudent warnings, the lovers could not hinder themselves from betraying their mutual understanding to the curé, the Justice, the town doctor, and La Bougival.

"Children," said the old man, "you are risking your happiness by not keeping the secret to yourselves."

At last, on the fête day, after mass, during which they had

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exchanged glances, Savinien, watched for by Ursule, crossed the street and came into the little garden, where they found themselves almost alone. To indulge them, the good man sat reading his paper in the Chinese pavilion.

"Dear Ursule," said Savinien, "will you give me a greater boon than my mother could if she were to give me life a second time?"

"I know what you would ask me," said Ursule, interrupting him. "Here, this is my answer," she added, as she took out of the pocket of her apron the chain made of her hair, and gave it him with a nervous trembling that betrayed her excessive joy. "Wear this for my sake," she said. "May my gift avert from you every peril by reminding you that my life is one with yours!"

"Ah, the little rogue! she is giving him a chain of her hair," said the doctor to himself. "How could she do it? Cut her beautiful fair hair!—Why, she would give him my blood!"

"And will you think it very odious of me if I ask you, before we part, to give me your formal promise that you will never have any husband but me?" said Savinien, kissing the chain, and looking at Ursule, while he could not restrain one tear.

"If I have not told you so too plainly already—I who went to gaze at the walls of a prison when you were inside," she answered with a deep blush, "I repeat it now, Savinien, I shall never love any one but you, and will never marry any one else."

Seeing that Ursule was half-hidden among the creepers, the young man could not resist the pleasure of clasping her to his heart and kissing her forehead; but she gave a low scream, and dropped on to the bench; and when Savinien sat down by her, imploring her pardon, he saw the doctor standing in front of them.

"My good fellow," said he, "Ursule is a sensitive plant; a hard word might kill her. For her sake you should moderate the expression of your love. Ah! if you had loved

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her for fifteen years, you would have taken her word," he added, in revenge for the last words of Savinien's letter.

Two days later Savinien left. In spite of the letters he wrote regularly to Ursule, she was a victim to a malady that had no evident cause. Like a fine fruit attacked by a maggot, one thought was eating her heart out. She lost her appetite and her bright color. When her godfather first asked her what she was feeling:

"I want to see the sea," she said.

"It is difficult to take you to a seaport in the month of December!" said the old man.

"Then shall I go?" said she.

If the wind was high, Ursule was in agonies, believing, in spite of the learned observations of her godfather, the curé, and the Justice, that Savinien was warring with a hurricane. The Justice made her happy for a few days with a print representing a naval cadet in his uniform. She read the newspapers, believing that they would give her news of the cruise in which Savinien was engaged. She devoured the seafaring novels of Cooper, and learned the meaning of sea words. Those proofs of a fixed idea, so often affected by other women, were so perfectly natural in Ursule that she foresaw in a dream every letter from Savinien, and never failed to predict their arrival by relating the premonitory dream.

"Now," said she to the doctor, on the fourth occasion when this had happened without the doctor and the curé being at all surprised; "now, I am easy; however far away Savinien may be, if he were wounded, I should feel it at the same moment."

The old physician sat plunged in deep meditation, which, to judge from the expression of his face, the Justice and the curé thought must be sorrowful.

"What is wrong?" they asked him, when Ursule had left them together.

"Will she live?" replied the old doctor. "Can so frail and tender a flower withstand the anguish of her heart?"

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Meanwhile the "little dreamer," as the curé called her, worked indefatigably; she understood the importance to a woman of the world of extensive information; and when she was not studying singing, harmony, or composition, she spent her time in reading the books chosen for her in her godfather's extensive library.

While leading this busy life she suffered much, but she did not complain. Sometimes she would sit for hours gazing at Savinien's window opposite. On Sunday, as she came from church, she followed Madame de Portenduère, watching her tenderly, for in spite of her sternness she loved her as being Savinien's mother. Her piety was doubled; she went to mass every morning, for she firmly believed that her dreams were a special grace from God.

Alarmed by the ravages of this nostalgia of love, on Ursule's birthday her godfather promised to take her to Toulon to see the departure of the fleet for Algiers without announcing their purpose to Savinien, who was sailing with it. The Justice and the curé kept the secret of the doctor's intentions with regard to this journey, which seemed to be undertaken for the benefit of Ursule's health, and which puzzled the heirs very greatly.

After having seen Savinien once more in his uniform, and after going on board the fine flagship of the admiral, to whom the minister had especially recommended young Portenduère, Ursule, at her friend's desire, went to inhale the soft air of Nice, and traveled along the Mediterranean coast as far as Genoa, where she had news of the arrival of the fleet before Algiers and a good report of the landing. The doctor would gladly have continued the journey across Italy, as much to divert Ursule's mind as to complete her education and enlarge her ideas by comparing manners and scenery, and by the delights of a land where the greatest works of art are to be seen, and where so many civilizations have left glorious traces; but the news of the opposition to the throne shown by the electors of the famous Chamber of 1830 called him back to France, whither he brought his ward home in

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a blooming state of health, and happy in the possession of a small model of the ship on which Savinien was serving.

The elections of 1830 gave cohesion to the Minoret heirs; for, by the advice of Goupil and of Désiré Minoret, they formed a committee at Nemours, by whose efforts the Liberal candidate was returned for Fontainebleau. Massin exerted immense influence over the country voters. Five of the postmaster's farmers also had votes. Dionis represented more than eleven votes. By meeting at the notary's, Crémière, Massin, the postmaster, and their adherents got into a habit of assembling there. On the doctor's return, Dionis' room had thus become their camping ground.

The Justice and the Mayor, who then combined to resist the Liberals of Nemours, were beaten by the Opposition in spite of the efforts of the gentry in the neighborhood, and their defeat bound them very closely together. When Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon told the doctor of the result of this antagonism, which had divided Nemours, for the first time, into two parties, and had given importance to his next-of-kin, Charles X. was actually leaving Rambouillet for Cherbourg. Désiré Minoret, whose opinions were those of the Paris bar, had invited fifteen of his friends, with Goupil at their head, to come from Nemours; the postmaster gave them horses to hurry to Paris, where they joined Désiré on the night of the 28th of July. Désiré and Goupil led this little troop to assist in the seizure of the Hôtel de Ville.

Désiré Minoret received the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and was appointed Deputy to the Public Prosecutor at Fontainebleau. Goupil won the Cross of July. Dionis was elected Mayor of Nemours, in the place of the Sieur Levrault, and the town council was then composed of Minoret-Levrault, deputy-mayor, of Massin, Crémière, and all the followers of Dionis.

Bongrand only kept his appointment as Justice by the influence of his son, who was made Public Prosecutor at Melun, his marriage with Mademoiselle Levrault seeming at that time probable.

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When three per cents were down to forty-five, the doctor set out to post to Paris, and invested five hundred and forty thousand francs in certificates to the bearer. The rest of his fortune, amounting to about two hundred and seventy thousand francs, placed likewise in the funds, yielded nominally fifteen thousand francs a year. He invested in the same way the money left to Ursule by the old professor, as well as the eight thousand francs of nine years' accumulated interest, which, with the help of a small addition on his part to make it up to a round sum, brought in fourteen hundred francs a year to his ward. In obedience to her master's advice, La Bougival also would get three hundred and fifty francs a year by investing in the same way her five thousand and odd francs of savings. These prudent steps, as planned by the doctor and his friend Bongrand, were taken in perfect secrecy under favor of the political excitement. When calm was more or less restored, the doctor purchased a little house adjoining his own, and pulled it down, as well as the wall of his courtyard, to construct on the ground a coach-house and stables. That he should spend capital bearing a thousand francs interest seemed to all the Minoret heirs pure insanity. This supposed craziness was the beginning of a new era in the doctor's life; at a moment when horses and carriages were being almost given away, he brought from Paris three fine horses and a chariot.

The first time the old man came to mass in a carriage, on a rainy day at the beginning of November 1830, and got out to give his hand to Ursule, all the townsfolk rushed to the Square, as much to see the doctor's carriage and cross-question the coachman, as to comment on his ward, to whose excessive ambition Massin, Crémière, and the postmaster ascribed their uncle's follies.

"A chariot! heh, Massin?" cried Goupil. "Your inheritance promises well, hein!"

"You asked good wages, I suppose, Cabirolle?" said the postmaster to the son of one of his guards, who took charge of the horses, "for it is to be hoped that you will not see

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many horse-shoes worn through in the service of a man of eighty. How much did those horses cost?"

"Four thousand francs. The chariot, though second-hand, cost him two thousand; but it is a good one. The wheels have the patent axle-box."

"What do you call it, Cabirolle?" asked Madame Crémière.

"He says they have latent axle-hocks," replied Goupil. "It is an English notion; they invented those wheels. Look how neat it is; all covered up, nothing to be seen, nothing to catch, no ugly square iron peg projecting beyond the axle."

"What does axer-hock mean, then?" asked Madame Crémière very innocently.

"Surely," said Goupil, "you need hardly axe that."

"Ah! I understand," said she.

"No, no; you are a good soul," said Goupil. "It is a shame to take you in. The real word is patent axe-locks, because you must axe how it is fastened."

"That's it, madame," said Cabirolle, who was himself taken in by Goupil's explanation, the clerk spoke with such gravity.

"It is a handsome carriage, at any rate," said Crémière, "and he must be rich to set up in such style."

"She is going ahead, that little girl!" remarked Goupil. "But she is right; she is showing you how to enjoy life. Why have not you fine horses and chariots—you, Father Minoret? Will you submit to be humiliated? In your place I would have a coach like a prince's."

"I say, Cabirolle," said Massin, "is it the little girl who puts my uncle up to all this luxury?"

"I don't know," replied Cabirolle, "but she is, so to speak, mistress of the whole place. And now master after master comes from Paris. She is to learn to paint, they say."

"I will take the opportunity of having my likeness done," said Madame Crémière. Country folks still speak of having a likeness done instead of a portrait taken.

"But the old German is not dismissed," said Madame Massin.

"No, he is here to-day," replied Cabirolle.

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"There is safety in numbers," observed Madame Crémière, making everybody laugh.

"You need no longer count on the inheritance," cried Goupil. "Ursule is nearly seventeen; she is prettier than ever; traveling forms the youthful mind, and she knows the length of your uncle's foot. The coach brings her five or six parcels a week, and dressmakers and milliners are always coming to try her gowns and things. My mistress is furious, I can tell you. Just wait till Ursule comes out, and look at her little neckerchief—a real Indian square, that must have cost six hundred francs."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst, it could not have produced a greater effect on the group of inheritors than this speech from Goupil, who rubbed his hands.

The doctor's old green drawing-room was redecorated by an upholsterer from Paris. Judged by the prodigality of his outlay, the doctor was accused first of having concealed the amount of his fortune and of having sixty thousand francs a year, and then of spending his capital to humor Ursule. He was regarded alternately as a millionaire and a spendthrift. "He is an old fool!" summed up the opinion of the neighbors. The misguided verdict of the little town had this advantage: it deceived the next-of-kin, who never suspected Savinien's love for Ursule, which was the real cause of the doctor's expenditure, for he was enchanted to accustom his goddaughter to play her part as a Vicomtesse; and having an income now of fifty thousand francs, he indulged himself in the pleasure of beautifying his idol.

In the month of February 1832, on the day when Ursule was seventeen, as she rose in the morning she saw Savinien at his window in his sub-lieutenant's uniform.

"How is it that I knew nothing about it?" she asked herself.

After the taking of Algiers, where Savinien had distinguished himself by a deed of valor that had won him the Cross, the corvette on which he sailed having remained at

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sea for many months, he had been quite unable to send a letter to the doctor, and he did not choose to retire from the service without consulting him. The new Government, wishing to keep so illustrious a name on the navy-list, had taken advantage of the general scramble of July to promote Savinien. Having obtained a fortnight's leave, the young lieutenant had come by mail from Toulon in time for Ursule's birthday, and to ask the doctor's advice at the same time.

"He is come!" cried the girl, rushing into her godfather's room.

"That is well," he replied. "I can guess his reason for quitting the service; he can now remain at Nemours."

"This is my birthday treat! It is all in those words!" she exclaimed, embracing the doctor.

In reply to a signal she made him, Savinien came across at once. She wanted to admire him; he seemed to her changed for the better. In fact, military discipline gives to a man's gestures, gait, and demeanor a mixture of gravity and decision, a certain rectitude, which enables the most superficial observer to recognize a soldier under a civilian's coat; nothing can more clearly prove that man is made to command. Ursule loved Savinien all the more for it, and felt a child's delight in walking arm in arm with him in the little garden, while she made him tell her the part he had played "in his capacity of naval cadet" in the siege of Algiers. Evidently it was Savinien who had taken Algiers. She saw everything red, she declared, when she looked at Savinien's decoration. The doctor, who, while dressing in his room, watched the pair, presently joined them. Then, without telling the Vicomte everything, he explained to him that in the event of Madame de Portenduère's consenting to his marriage with Ursule, his goddaughter's fortune was such as to make his pay superfluous in any rank he might be promoted to.

"Alas!" said Savinien, "it will take a long time to overcome my mother's opposition. Before I left, when she had the alternative of keeping me near her if she would agree to

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my marrying Ursule, or of seeing me only at long intervals, and knowing that I was exposed to the risks of my profession, she let me go——"

"But, Savinien, we shall be together," said Ursule, taking his hand and shaking it with a kind of irritation.

That they should see each other and never part was to her the sum-total of love; she saw nothing beyond; and her pretty impatience, and the petulance of her tone, expressed such perfect innocence that the doctor and Savinien were touched.

Savinien sent in his letter of resignation, and Ursule's birthday was crowned with joy by her lover's presence.

A few months later, by the beginning of May, Doctor Minoret's home life had settled into calm regularity again, but with another constant visitor. The young Vicomte's assiduity was at once interpreted as that of a future bridegroom; all the more so since, whether at mass or out walking, his manner and Ursule's plainly betrayed the mutual understanding of their hearts. Dionis remarked to the heirs that the old man never claimed interest from Madame de Portenduère, who already owed it for three years.

"She will be forced to give in, to consent to her son's marrying beneath him," said the notary. "If such a misfortune should happen, it is probable that the larger part of your uncle's fortune will prove, as Basile says, an irresistible argument."

When the expectant heirs understood that the old man's preference for Ursule was too great for him not to secure her happiness at their expense, their wrath became as cunning as it was deep. Every evening since the revolution of July had seen them meet at Dionis' house, and there they cursed the lovers; and the evening hardly ever ended without their having tried in vain to hit on some way of thwarting the old man. Zélie, who had, no doubt, like the doctor, taken advantage of the fall in the funds to invest her enormous savings, was the most furious against the orphan and the Portenduères. One evening, when Goupil—who, however, as a rule, took care not to spend his evenings too dully—had come in

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to pick up some information as to the affairs of the town, which were under discussion, Zélie had a recrudescence of hatred. She had that morning seen the doctor, with Ursule and Savinien, returning from a drive in the neighborhood, with an appearance of intimacy that told all.

"I would give thirty thousand francs, gladly, if only God would take our uncle to Himself before that Portenduère and that little minx could be married," said she.

Goupil walked home with Monsieur and Madame Minoret; and when they were in the middle of their vast courtyard, he said, looking about him to make sure that they were alone:

"Will you give me money enough to buy Dionis out of his business, and I will see that the marriage of Monsieur de Portenduère is broken off?"

"How?" asked the colossus.

"Do you think I am fool enough to tell you my plan?" replied the clerk.

"Well, my boy, make them quarrel, and we will see," said Zélie.

"I am not going to plunge into such a job on the strength of 'we will see.' The young gentleman is hot-headed, and might kill me; and I must be well rough-shod, and his match with the rapier and pistol. Set me up in life, and I will keep my word."

"Stop the marriage, and I will set you up," retorted the postmaster.

"For nine months now you have been debating whether you will lend me a wretched fifteen thousand francs to buy Lecœur's business—the usher's—and you expect me to take your word? Get along! You will lose your uncle's fortune; and serve you right!"

"If it were only a matter of fifteen thousand francs and Lecœur's business, I don't say no," replied Zélie; "but to be security for fifty thousand crowns——"

"But I will repay you," said Goupil, with a fascinating leer at Zélie, which the postmistress met with an imperious stare.

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It was like vitriol on steel.

"We will wait," said Zélie.

"Possessed by the genius of evil!" thought Goupil. "If ever I get hold of these two," said he to himself as he went away, "I will squeeze them like lemons!"

Savinien, while cultivating the society of the doctor, the Justice, and the curé, showed them the excellence of his character. The young man's love for Ursule, so absolutely disinterested, so constant, appealed so strongly to the three friends that they no longer separated the two young people in their thoughts. Before long the monotony of this patriarchal life, and the confidence the lovers felt in their future, had given their affection a fraternal aspect. The doctor often left Savinien and Ursule together. He had rightly estimated the admirable young man who kissed Ursule's hand when he entered, and would never have asked such a privilege when alone with her, so deep was his respect for the innocence and candor of the child; and the extreme sensitiveness which she had often betrayed had taught him that a hard word, a cold look, or alternations of gentleness and roughness might kill her. The utmost boldness of the lovers always showed itself in the presence of the old men in the evening.

Two years, full of secret delight, thus slipped away, unbroken by any event but the useless efforts of the young man to obtain his mother's consent to his marriage with Ursule. He would sometimes talk for the whole morning, his mother listening to his entreaties and arguments, but making no reply but by the obstinate silence of a Bretonne or by curt refusals.

At nineteen, Ursule, elegant, well educated, and an excellent musician, had nothing more to learn; she was perfection. And she had a reputation for beauty, grace, and information which reached far and wide One day the doctor had to refuse the proposals of the Marquise d'Aiglemont, who would have married her to her eldest son. Six months later.

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in spite of the absolute silence preserved by Ursule, by her guardian, and by Madame d'Aiglemont, Savinien heard by chance of this affair. Touched by such delicate conduct, he spoke of it as an argument to overcome his mother's aversion, but she would only say:

"If the d'Aiglemonts choose to marry beneath them, is that any reason that we should?"

In the month of December 1834 the worthy and pious old man was visibly breaking. As they saw him come out of church, his face pinched and yellow, his eyes dim, all the town began to speak of his approaching end, for the good man was now eighty-eight years of age.

"Now you will know where you stand," they said to the heirs.

The doctor's death had, in fact, the fascination of a problem. But the old man did not think that he was ill; he had illusions on the subject, and neither poor Ursule, nor Savinien, nor Monsieur Bongrand, nor the curé, could, in decency, explain his danger to him; the town doctor of Nemours, who came to see him every evening, dared prescribe nothing more. Old Minoret felt no pain; he was gently burning out. In him the intellect remained clear, strong, and exact. In old men of this stamp the soul is potent over the body, and gives it strength to die standing. To postpone the fatal hour, the curé granted his parishioner a dispensation from attending mass at church, and allowed him to read prayers at home, for the doctor carefully fulfilled all his religious duties; the nearer he was to the grave, the more he loved God.

At the New Year, Ursule persuaded him to sell his carriage and horses, and dismiss Cabirolle. The Justice, whose uneasiness as to Ursule's prospects was far from being lulled by the old man's half-confidences, touched on the delicate question of his fortune, explaining to him one evening the necessity for making Ursule independent by law, by declaring her to be of age. She would then be competent to receive

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an account of his guardianship and possess property; this would enable him to leave her money. In spite of this opening, the old man, though he had formerly consulted the Justice, did not confide to him what his purpose was with regard to Ursule; however, he formally declared her of age. The more eager the lawyer showed himself to know what steps his old friend had taken to provide for Ursule, the more suspicious the doctor became. In short, Minoret was actually afraid to confide to the Justice the secret of the thirty-six thousand francs in bonds payable to the bearer.

"Why," said Bongrand, "set chance against you?"

"Of two chances," replied the doctor, "one must avoid the most risky."

Bongrand carried through the matter of the "emancipation" so briskly that Mademoiselle Mirouët was legally independent on the day when she was twenty. This anniversary was destined to be the last festival kept by the old doctor, who, feeling no doubt some presentiment of his approaching end, celebrated the occasion magnificently by giving a little ball, to which he invited the young people of the four families of Dionis, Crémière, Minoret, and Massin. Savinien, Bongrand, the curé and his two assistant priests, the town doctor, Mesdames Zélie Minoret, Massin, and Crémière, with old Schmucke, were his guests at a grand dinner before the dance.

"I feel that I have not so long to stay," said the old man to the notary towards the end of the evening. "I beg you to come to-morrow to draw up the report and accounts I have to hand over to Ursule as her guardian, so as to avoid all complications after my death. Thank God, I have not robbed my heirs of a sou, and have spent nothing but my income. Messieurs Crémière, Massin, and my nephew Minoret are the family trustees appointed for Ursule, and they must be present at the auditing of the account."

These words, overheard by Massin, and repeated in the ballroom, filled the three families with joy, after they had spent three years in constant alterations of feelings, believing themselves sometimes rich, and sometimes disinherited.

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"It is a lamp flying out," said Madame Crémière. (She meant dying out.)

When, at about two in the morning, no one remained in the room but Savinien, Bongrand, and the Abbé Chaperon, the old doctor said, as he pointed to Ursule, lovely in her ball-dress, having just said good-night to the young Crémière and Massin girls:

"I place her in your hands, my friends. In a few days I shall be no longer here to protect her; stand between her and the world until she is married—I am afraid for her——"

These words made a painful impression. The account drawn up and read a few days later in the presence of a family council proved that Doctor Minoret was indebted to Ursule in the sum of ten thousand six hundred francs, partly as arrears of the shares bearing interest to the amount of fourteen thousand francs, which was accounted for by the investment of Captain de Jordy's legacy, and partly as a small capital of five thousand francs derived from certain gifts made to his ward during the last fifteen years, on their respective birthdays or name-days.

This authenticated schedule of the account had been advised by the Justice, who feared what might be the result of the old man's death; and, unhappily, not without reason. The day after the account was passed which made Ursule the mistress of ten thousand six hundred francs in shares and of fourteen hundred francs a year, the doctor had an attack of weakness which compelled him to keep his bed.

In spite of the caution which shrouded the house, a rumor spread in the town that he was dead, and the heirs flew about the streets like the beads of a rosary of which the thread is snapped. Massin, who came to inquire, heard from Ursule herself that the old man was in bed. Unfortunately, the town doctor had prognosticated that when Minoret took to his bed he would die at once. From that moment the whole family stood posted in the street, in the square, or on their front doorsteps, in spite of the cold, absorbed in discussing the long-expected event, and waiting for the moment when the

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curé should carry to the old man the last sacraments with all the ceremony usual in provincial towns. Hence, when two days later the Abbé Chaperon crossed the High Street, accompanied by his curate and the choir boys, the inheritors followed him to take possession of the house and prevent anything being removed, and to clutch with greedy hands all the imaginary treasure. When the doctor saw, beyond the clerics, all his heirs on their knees, and, far from praying, watching him with gleaming eyes as bright as the twinkling tapers, he could not repress a mischievous smile. The curé looked round, saw them, and read the prayers very slowly. The postmaster was the first to rise from his uncomfortable attitude, his wife followed his example; Massin, fearful lest Zélie and her husband should lay a hand on some little possession, went after them to the drawing-room, and there, a few minutes later, all the party had assembled.

"He is too honest a man to steal extreme unction," said Crémière; "so we may be easy."

"Yes; we shall each have about twenty thousand francs a year," replied Madame Massin.

"I have got it into my head," said Zélie, "that for the last three years he has not been investing; he liked to hoard the money——"

"The treasure is in his cellar no doubt?" said Massin to Crémière.

"If we are so lucky as to find anything at all!" observed Minoret-Levrault.

"But after what he said at the ball," cried Madame Massin, "there can be no doubt."

"Whatever there may be," said Crémière, "how shall we proceed? Shall we divide? Or put it into the lawyer's hands? Or distribute it in lots? For, after all, we are all of age."

A discussion, which soon became acrid, arose as to the method of procedure. At the end of half an hour a noise of loud voices, above them all Zélie's shrill tones, rang across the courtyard out into the street.

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"He must be dead," said the curious crowd that had collected there.

The uproar reached the doctor's ears, who could hear these words:

"But there is the house; the house is worth thirty thousand francs!" shouted, or rather bellowed, by Crémière.

"Very well, we will pay for it as much as it is worth," retorted Zélie sharply.

"Monsieur le Curé," said the old man to the Abbé, who had remained with his friend after the sacrament, "let me die in peace. My heirs, like those of Cardinal Ximenes, are capable of pillaging my house before I am dead, and I have no monkey to make restitution. Go and explain that I will have no one in the house."

The curé and the physician went downstairs and repeated the dying man's orders, adding, in their indignation, some severe words of reproof.

"Madame Bougival," said the town-doctor, "shut the gate, and let no one in; a man cannot even die quietly, it would seem.—Make a cup of mustard, to apply plasters to Monsieur Minoret's feet."

"Your uncle is not dead; he may live some time yet," said the Abbé to the family who had brought all their children. "He desires perfect silence, and will have no one near him but his ward. What a difference between that young creature's conduct and yours?"

"Old hypocrite!" cried Crémière. "I will keep guard. It is quite possible that he may plot something against our interests."

The postmaster had already disappeared into the garden, intending to watch over his uncle with Ursule, and to gain admission into the house as her assistant. He came back on tiptoe without his boots making a sound, for there were carpets in the passages and on the stairs. He thus came close to his uncle's door without being heard. The curé and the physician had left; La Bougival was preparing the mustard plasters.

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"Are we quite alone?" said the old man to his ward.

Ursule stood on tiptoe to look out on the courtyard.

"Yes," said she, "Monsieur le Curé shut the gate as he went out."

"My darling child," said the dying man, "my hours, my minutes are numbered. I have not been a doctor for nothing; the mustard plasters recommended by the apothecary will not carry me through till to-night.—Do not cry, Ursule," he said, finding himself interrupted by his ward's sobs, "but listen to me: the point is that you should marry Savinien. As soon as La Bougival comes up with the sinapism, go down to the Chinese pavilion; here is the key; lift up the marble top of the Boule cabinet, and under it you will find a letter addressed to you; take it, and come up and show it to me, for I shall not die easy unless I know that it is in your hands. When I am dead, do not at once announce the fact; first send for Monsieur de Portenduère, read the letter together, and swear to me in his name and in your own that you will obey my last injunctions. When he has done what I desire, you can announce my death, and then the comedy of the inheritance will begin.—God grant that those monsters may not ill-use you."

"Yes, godfather."

The postmaster did not wait for the end of the scene; he took himself off on tiptoe, remembering that the locked door of the pavilion opened from the book-gallery. He himself had been present at the time of a discussion between the architect and the locksmith, who had insisted that if there were to be a way into the house through the window looking out on the river, there must be a lock to the door leading into the book-gallery, the pavilion being a sort of summer-house.

Minoret, his eyes dim with greed, and his blood singing in his ears, unscrewed the lock with a pocket-knife as dexterously as a thief. He went into the pavilion, took the packet of papers without stopping to open it, replaced the lock and restored order, and then went to sit in the dining-room, wait-

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ing till La Bougival should be gone upstairs with the mustard plaster, to steal out of the house. This he achieved with all the greater ease because Ursule thought it more necessary to see that the mustard was applied than to obey her godfather's injunctions.

"The letter, the letter," said the old man in a dying voice. "Do as I bid you—there is the key. I must see the letter in your hands."

He spoke with such a wild look, that La Bougival said to Ursule: "Do as your godfather tells you, at once, or you'll be the death of him."

She kissed his forehead, took the key, and went down, but was immediately recalled by a piercing cry from La Bougival, and ran back. The old man glanced at her, saw that her hands were empty, sat up in bed, and tried to speak—and then died with a last fearful gasp, his eyes staring with terror.

The poor child, seeing death for the first time, fell on her knees, and melted into tears. La Bougival closed the old man's eyes, and laid him straight. Then, when she had "dressed the corpse," as she said, she went to call Monsieur Savinien; but the heirs, who were prowling at the top of the street, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, exactly like a flock of crows waiting till a horse is buried, to come and scratch up the earth, and ferret with beak and claws, came running in with the swiftness of birds of prey.

The postmaster, meanwhile, had gone home to master the contents of the mysterious packet. This was what he read:

"To my dear Ursule Mirouët, daughter of my illegitimate brother-in-law, Joseph Mirouët, and of his wife, Dinah Grollman.

"NEMOURS, *January* 15, 1830.

"MY LITTLE ANGEL,—My fatherly affection, which you have so fully justified, is based not merely on the promise I swore to your poor father to fill his place, but also on your likeness to Ursule Mirouët, my late wife, of whom you con-

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stantly remind me by your grace and nature, your artlessness and charm.

"Your being the child of my father-in-law's natural son might lead to any Will in your favor being disputed——"

"The old rascal!" exclaimed the postmaster.

"My adopting you would have given rise to a lawsuit. Again, I have always been averse to the notion of marrying you myself to leave you my fortune, for I might have lived to a great age and spoilt your future happiness, which is delayed only by the life of Madame de Portenduère. Having regard to these difficulties, and wishing to leave you a fortune adequate to a handsome position——"

"The old wretch, he thought of everything!"

"Without doing any injury to my heirs——"

"Miserable Jesuit! As if we had not a right to his whole fortune!"

"I have put aside for you the sum-total of my savings for the last eighteen years, which I have regularly invested by my lawyer's assistance, in the hope of leaving you as happy as money can make you. Without wealth your education and superior ideas would be a misfortune; besides, you ought to bring a good dowry to the excellent young man who loves you. So look in the middle of the third volume of the *Pandects,* in folio, bound in red morocco, the last volume on the lower shelf above the library cupboard, in the third division on the drawing-room side, and you will find three certificates to bearer of three per cent consols, each for 12,000 francs."

"What a depth of villainy!" cried the postmaster. "Ah, God will not permit me to be thus thwarted!"

"Take them at once, with the small savings left at the moment of my death, which are in the next volume. Remember, my darling child, that you are bound to obey blindly the wish that has been the joy of my whole life, and which will compel me to appeal for help to God if you should disobey me. But to guard against any scruple of your dear conscience, which is, I know, ingenious in tormenting you, you will find with this a Will in due form, bequeathing these certificates to

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Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère; so, whether you own them, or they are the gift of your lover, they will be legitimately yours.—Your godfather,

"DENIS MINORET."

Subjoined to this letter, on a sheet of stamped paper, was the following document:

"This is my Will.

"I, DENIS MINORET, Doctor of Medicine, resident at Nemours, sound in mind and body, as the date of this Will proves, dedicate my soul to God, beseeching Him to forgive my long errors in favor of my sincere repentance. Then, having discerned in the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère a sincere affection for me, I bequeath to him thirty-six thousand francs in perpetual consols at three per cent, to be paid out of my estate as a first charge.

"Made and written all by my own hand at Nemours, January 11, 1831.

"DENIS MINORET."

Without a moment's hesitation the postmaster, who, to make sure of being alone, had locked himself into his wife's room, looked about for the tinder-box; he had two warnings from heaven by the extinction of two matches which would not light. The third blazed up. He burnt the letter and the will on the hearth, and took the needless precaution of burying the ashes of the paper and wax in the cinders. Then, licking his lips at the idea of having thirty-six thousand francs unknown to his wife, he flew back to his uncle's house, spurred by one idea—the single fixed idea that his dull brain could master. On seeing his uncle's dwelling invaded by the three families, at last in possession of the stronghold, he quaked lest he should be unable to carry out a project which he gave himself no time to think over, considering only the obstacles in the way.

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"What are you doing there?" he said to Massin and Crémière. "Do you suppose that we are going to leave the house and papers to be pillaged? There are three of us; we cannot encamp on the spot. You, Crémière, go at once to Dionis and tell him to come and certify the death. Though I am an official, I am not competent to draw up the death certificate of my own uncle. You, Massin, had better ask old Bongrand to seal up everything. You," he added to his wife, Madame Massin, and Madame Crémière, "you should sit with Ursule, ladies, and so nothing can be taken. Above all, lock the gate, so that no one can get out."

The women, who felt the weight of this advice, went at once to Ursule's room, where they found the noble girl, already the object of such cruel suspicions, on her knees in prayer, her face bathed in tears.

Minoret, guessing that they would not remain long with Ursule, and suspicious of his co-heirs' want of trust in him, hastened to the library, saw the volume, which he opened, took out the three certificates, and found in the other thirty bank notes. Notwithstanding his base nature, the big man fancied a whole chime was ringing in each ear, the blood hissed in his brain, as he achieved the theft. In spite of the cold weather, his shirt was wet with perspiration down his back; and his legs shook to such a degree that he dropped into an armchair in the drawing-room as if he had been struck on the head with a sledge-hammer.

"Dear me, how glib the idea of a fortune has made old Minoret!" Massin had said, as they hurried through the town. "Did you notice?" he observed to Crémière. "Come here, and go there! How well he knows the game!"

"Yes, for a fat-head he had a style——"

"I say," said Massin in alarm, "his wife is with him. They are two too many. Do you run the errands; I will go back again."

So just as the postmaster had seated himself, he saw the registrar's hot face at the gate, for he had run back with the nimbleness of a ferret.

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"Well, what is it?" asked the postmaster, as he let in his co-heir.

"Nothing; I came back to witness the sealing," replied Massin, glaring at him like a wild cat.

"I wish it were done, and that we could all go quietly home," said Minoret.

"And we will put some one in charge," said the registrar. "La Bougival is capable of anything in the interest of that little minx. We will put in Goupil."

"Goupil!" cried Minoret; "he would find the hoard, and we should see nothing but smoke."

"Let us see," replied Massin; "this evening they will watch by the dead. We shall have everything sealed up in an hour, so our wives will be on guard themselves. The funeral must be to-morrow at noon. The inventory cannot be made till after a week."

"But," said the colossus smiling, "we can turn out that minx, and we will engage the mayor's drummer to stop in the house and guard the property."

"Very good," said the registrar, "see to that yourself; you are the head of the Minorets."

"Now, ladies, ladies, be so good as to wait in the drawing-room. You cannot be off to dinner yet; we must witness the affixing of the seals for our common interest."

He then took Zélie aside to impart to her Massin's idea about Ursule. The women, whose hearts were full of vengeance, and who longed to turn the tables on "the little hussy," hailed the idea of turning her out of the house with glee.

When Bongrand arrived he was indignant at the request made to him, as a friend of the deceased, by Zélie and Madame Massin, to desire Ursule to leave the house.

"Go yourselves and turn her out the home of her father, her godfather, her uncle, her benefactor, her guardian! Go —you who owe your fortunes to her nobility of character —take her by the shoulders—thrust her into the street in the face of the whole town! You think her capable of robbing you? Well, then, engage a guardian of the property;

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you have a perfect right to do so. But understand clearly that I will put seals on nothing in her room; it is her own, all that is in it is her property; I shall inform her what her rights are, and advise her to place there everything that belongs to her—Oh! in your presence!" he added, hearing a murmur of disapproval.

"What?" cried the tax-receiver to the postmaster and the women, who were speechless at Bongrand's angry address.

"A pretty magistrate!" said Minoret.

Ursule, on a low chair, half fainting, her head thrown back, her hair undone, was sobbing from time to time. Her eyes were heavy, their lids swollen; in short, she was in a state of moral and physical prostration, which might have touched the heart of the fiercest creatures excepting heirs.

"Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, after my happy fête, here are death and despair," she said, with the unconscious poetry of a sweet nature. "You know what he was. In twenty years he never spoke an impatient word to me! I thought he would live to a hundred! He was a mother to me," she cried, "and a kind mother!"

The utterance of her broken ideas brought on a torrent of tears, broken by sobs, and she fell back half senseless.

"My child," said the Justice, hearing the inheritors on the stairs, "you have the rest of your life to weep in, and only a moment for business. Bring into your own room everything in the house that belongs to you. The heirs insist on my affixing seals——"

"Oh, his heirs may take everything!" cried Ursule, starting up in a spasm of fierce indignation. "I have here all that is precious to me!" and she struck her bosom.

"What? what?" asked the postmaster, who, with Massin, now showed his horrible face.

"The memory of his virtues, of his life, of all his words, the image of his heavenly mind," she replied, her eyes and cheeks flaming as she raised her hand with a proud gesture.

"Ay, and you have a key there too," cried Massin, going on all fours like a cat to seize a key which slipped out of the folds of her bodice as she lifted her arm.

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"It is the key of his study," she said, coloring. "He was sending me there just when he died."

The two men exchanged a hideous smile, and turned to the Justice with a look that expressed a blighting suspicion. Ursule saw and interpréted the look, malignant on Minoret's part, involuntary on Massin's, and drew herself up, as pale as if all her blood had ebbed; her eyes glistened with the lightnings that can only flash at the cost of vitality, and in a choking voice she said:

"Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, all that is in this room is mine only by my godfather's kindness; they may take it all; I have nothing about me but my clothes; I will go out of it and never come in again."

She went into her guardian's room, and no entreaties could bring her forth—for the heirs were a little ashamed of their conduct. She desired La Bougival to engage two rooms at the Old Posting Inn till she should find some lodging in the town, where they might stay together. She went into her room only to fetch her prayer-book, and remained all night with the Curé and another priest and Savinien, weeping and praying. Savinien came in after his mother had gone to bed, and knelt down without speaking by Ursule, who gave him the saddest smile, while thanking him for coming so faithfully to share in her sorrows.

"My child," said Monsieur Bongrand, bringing in a large bundle, "one of your uncle's relations has taken out of your wardrobe all that you need, for the seals will not be removed for some days, and you will then have everything that belongs to you. In your own interest I have placed seals on your things too."

"Thank you," she said, pressing his hand. "Come and look at him once more. You would think he was sleeping."

The old man's face had at this moment the transient bloom of beauty which is seen on the face of those who have died without pain; it seemed radiant.

"Did he not give you anything privately before he died?" asked the Justice of Ursule in a whisper.

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"Nothing," she replied. "He only said something about a letter——"

"Good! that will be found," said Bongraud. "Then it is lucky for you that they insisted on the seals."

At daybreak Ursule bid adieu to the house where her happy childhood had been spent, and above all to the room where her love had had its birth, and which was so dear to her that in the midst of her deep grief she had a tear of regret for this peaceful and happy nook. After gazing for the last time on her windows and on Savinien in turn, she went off to the inn, accompanied by La Bougival, who carried her bundle; by the Justice, who gave her his arm; and by Savinien, her kind protector.

And so, in spite of every precaution, the suspicious lawyer was in the right; Ursule would be bereft of fortune, and at war with the heirs-at-law.

Next day the whole town followed Doctor Minoret's funeral. When they heard of the conduct of the next-of-kin to Ursule, most people thought it natural and necessary; there was an inheritance at stake; the old man was miserly; Ursule might fancy she had rights; the heirs were only protecting their property; and, after all, she had humiliated them enough in their uncle's time—he had made them as welcome as a dog among ninepins. Désiré Minoret, who was doing no great things in his office, said the neighbors who were envious of the postmaster, came for the funeral. Ursule, unable to attend, was in bed, ill of a nervous fever, brought on as much by the insults offered her as by her deep grief.

"Just look at that hypocrite in tears," said some of the faction, pointing to Savinien, who was in great sorrow for the doctor's death.

"The question is whether he has any good cause for tears," remarked Goupil. "Do not laugh too soon; the seals have not yet been removed."

"Pooh!" said Minoret, who knew more than he did, "you have always frightened us for nothing."

Just as the procession was starting for the church, Goupil

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had a bitter mortification; he was about to take Désiré's arm, but the young man turned away, thus denying his comrade in the eyes of all Nemours.

"It is of no use to be angry," said the clerk to himself; "I should lose all chance of revenge," and his dry heart swelled in his bosom like a sponge.

Before breaking the seals and making the inventory, they had to wait for the public prosecutor's commission, as public guardian of all orphans, to be issued to Bongrand as his representative. Then the Minoret property, of which every one had talked for ten days, was released, and the inventory was made and witnessed with every formality of the law. Dionis made a job of it; Goupil was glad to have a finger in any mischief; and as the business was a paying one, they took their time over it. They generally breakfasted on the spot. The notary, the clerks, heirs, and witnesses drank the finest wines in the cellar.

In a country town, where every one has his own house, it is rather difficult to find lodgings; and when any business is for sale, the house commonly goes with it. The Justice, who was charged by the court with the guardianship of the orphan girl, saw no way of housing her out of the inn but by buying for her, in the High Street, at the corner of the bridge over the Loing, a small house, with a door opening into a passage; on the ground-floor was a sitting-room with two windows on the street, and a kitchen behind it, with a glass door looking into a yard of about a hundred square feet. A narrow stair, with a borrowed light from the river side, led to the first floor, containing three rooms, and to two attics above.

Monsieur Bongrand borrowed two thousand francs of La Bougival's savings to pay the first instalment of the price of this house, which was six thousand francs, and he obtained a delay for the remainder. To make room for the books which Ursule wished to buy back, Bongrand had a partition pulled down between two of the first floor rooms, having ascertained that the depth of the house was sufficient to hold the

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book-shelves. He and Savinien hurried on the workmen, who cleaned, painted, and restored this little dwelling with such effect, that, by the end of March, Ursule could move from the inn and find in the plain little house a bedroom just like that from which the heirs had ejected her, for it was full of the furniture brought away by the Justice at the removal of the seals. La Bougival, sleeping overhead, could be brought down at the call of a bell which hung by her young mistress' bed.

The room intended for the library, the ground floor sitting-room, and the kitchen, as yet unfurnished, were colored, repapered, and painted, awaiting the purchases the young girl might make at the sale of her godfather's household goods.

Though they well knew Ursule's strength of character, the Justice and the curé both dreaded for her the sudden transition to a life so devoid of the elegance and luxury to which the doctor had always accustomed her. As to Savinien, he fairly wept over it; and he had secretly given the workmen and the upholsterer more than one gratuity in order that Ursule should find no difference, in her own room at least, between the old and the new. But the young girl, who found all her happiness in Savinien's eyes, showed the sweetest resignation. In these circumstances she charmed her two old friends, and proved to them, for the hundredth time, that only grief of heart could give her real suffering. Her sorrow at her godfather's death was too deep for her to feel the bitterness of her changed fortunes, which, nevertheless, raised a fresh obstacle in the way of her marriage. Savinien's dejection at seeing her brought so low was such that she felt obliged to say in his ear, as they came out of church the morning of her moving into her new abode:

"Love cannot live without patience; we must wait."

As soon as the preamble to the inventory was drawn up, Massin, advised by Goupil, who turned to him in his covert hatred of Minoret, hoping for more from the usurer's self-interest than from Zélie's thriftiness, foreclosed on Madame and Monsieur de Portenduère, whose term for payment had lapsed. The old lady was stunned by a summons to pay up

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129,517 francs 55 centimes to the heirs-at-law within twenty-four hours, and interest from the day of the demand, under penalty of the seizure of her landed estate. To borrow money to pay with was impossible. Savinien went to consult a lawyer at Fontainebleau.

"You have a bad set to deal with who will make no compromise; their point is to drive you to extremities and take possession of the farm at Bordières," said the lawyer. "The best thing will be to effect a voluntary sale so as to avoid costs."

This melancholy news was a blow to the old Bretonne, to whom her son mildly remarked that if she had but consented to his marriage during Minoret's lifetime, the doctor would have placed all his possessions in the hands of Ursule's husband. At this moment they would have been enjoying wealth instead of suffering misery. Though spoken in no tone of reproach, this argument crushed the old lady quite as much as the notion of an immediate and violent eviction.

Ursule, hardly recovered from her fever and the blow dealt her by the doctor's next-of-kin, was bewildered with dismay when she heard of this fresh disaster. To love, and be unable to help the person beloved, is one of the most terrible pangs that the soul of a high-minded and delicate woman can suffer.

"I meant to buy my uncle's house," she said. "I will buy your mother's instead."

"Is it possible?" said Savinien. "You are under age, and cannot sell your securities without elaborate formalities, to which the public prosecutor would not give his consent. And, indeed, we shall attempt no resistance. All the town will look on with satisfaction at the discomfiture of a noble house. These townsfolk are like hounds at the death. Happily, I still have ten thousand francs, on which my mother can live till this deplorable business is wound up. And, after all, the inventory of your godfather's property is not yet complete. Monsieur Bongrand still hopes to find something for you. He is as much surprised as I am to find you left penniless. The doctor so often spoke to him and to

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me of the handsome future he had prepared for you, that we cannot at all understand this state of things."

"Oh," said she, "if I can but buy the books and my godfather's furniture, that they may not be dispersed or pass into strange hands, I am content with my lot."

"But who knows what price those rascally people may not set on the things you wish to have!"

From Montargis to Fontainebleau the Minoret heirs, and the million they hoped to find, were the talk of the country; but the most careful search made throughout the house since the removal of the seals had led to no discovery. The hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs of the Portenduère mortgage, the fifteen thousand francs a year in three per cents, then quoted at sixty-five, and yielding a capital of three hundred and eighty thousand, the house, valued at forty thousand francs, and the handsome furniture, amounted to a total of about six hundred thousand francs, which the outer world thought a very consoling figure.

Minoret had at this time some moments of acute uneasiness. La Bougival and Savinien, who, like the Justice, persisted in believing in the existence of a will, came in after every day's cataloguing to ask Bongrand the result of the investigations. The doctor's old friend would exclaim, as the clerks and the heirs-at-law quitted the premises: "I cannot understand it!"

As, in the eyes of many superficial observers, two hundred thousand francs apiece to each inheritor seemed a very fair fortune for the provinces, it never occurred to any one to inquire how the doctor could have kept house as he had done on an income of no more than fifteen thousand francs, since he had never drawn the interest on the Portenduère mortgage. Bongrand, Savinien, and the curé alone asked this question in Ursule's interest, and on hearing them give it utterance, the postmaster more than once turned pale.

"And yet we have certainly hunted everywhere—they to find a hoard, and I to find a will, in favor probably of Monsieur de Portenduère," said the Justice the day the inventory

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was finished and signed. "They have sifted the ash-heap, raised the marble tops, felt in his slippers, pulled the bedsteads to pieces, emptied the mattresses, run pins into the counterpanes and coverlets, turned out his eiderdown quilt, examined every scrap of paper, every drawer, dug over the ground in the cellar; and I was ready to bid them pull the house down."

"What do you think about it?" asked the curé. "The will has been made away with by one of them."

"And the securities?"

"Try to find them! Try to guess what such creatures would be at—as cunning, as wily, and as greedy as these Massins and Crémières. Make what you can of such a fortune as this Minoret's; he gets two hundred thousand francs for his share, and he is going to sell his license, his house, and his interest in the Messageries for three hundred and fifty thousand! What sums of money! To say nothing of the savings on his thirty odd thousand francs derived from real estate.—Poor doctor!"

"The will might have been hidden in the library?" said Savinien.

"And, therefore, I did not dissuade the child from buying the books. But for that, would it not have been folly to let her spend all her ready money in books she will never look into?"

The whole town had believed that the doctor's godchild was in possession of the undiscoverable securities; but when it was known beyond a doubt that her fourteen thousand francs in consols and her little personalty constituted her whole fortune, the doctor's house and furniture excited the greatest curiosity. Some thought that bank notes would be found in the stuffing of the chairs; others that the old man must have hidden them in his books. The sale accordingly afforded the spectacle of the strange precautions taken by the heirs. Dionis, as auctioneer, explained with regard to each article put up for sale that the heirs-at-law were selling the piece of furniture only, and not anything that might be found

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in it; then, before parting with it, they all submitted it to the closest scrutiny, pinched it, tapped it, shook it; and then gazed after it with the fond looks of a father parting with his only son for a voyage to the Indies.

"Oh, mademoiselle," said La Bougival, on her return from the first morning's sale, "I will not go again. Monsieur Bongrand is right; you could not bear to see it. Everything is upside down. They come and go as if it were the street; the handsomest furniture is used for anything that is wanted; they stand upon it; there is such a mess that a hen could not find her chicks! You might think there had been a fire. Everything is turned out into the courtyard, the wardrobes all open and empty! Oh, poor, dear man, it is lucky for him he is dead! This sale would have been the death of him!"

Bongrand, who was buying for Ursule the things of which the old man had been fond, and which were suitable for her small house, did not appear when the library was sold. Sharper than the heirs-at-law, whose greed would have made him pay too dear for the books, he gave a commission to a second-hand book dealer at Melun, who came to Nemours on purpose, and who managed to secure several lots. As a consequence of the suspicions of the heirs, the books were sold one by one. Three thousand volumes were turned over, shaken one by one, held by the boards and fluttered, to make any paper fly out that might be hidden between the leaves; finally, the bindings and backs were closely examined. The lots secured for Ursule mounted up to about six thousand five hundred francs, half of her claims on the estate.

The bookcase was not delivered over till it had been carefully examined by a cabinetmaker, noted for his experience of secret drawers and panels, who was sent for expressly from Paris. When the Justice gave orders that the bookcase and books should be conveyed to Mademoiselle Mirouët's house, the heirs-at-law felt some vague alarms, which were subsequently dissipated by seeing that she was no richer than before.

Minoret bought his uncle's house, which the co-heirs ran

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up to fifty thousand francs, imagining that the postmaster hoped to find a treasure in the walls. And the deed of sale contained stipulations on this point. A fortnight after the conclusion of the whole business, Minoret, having sold his post-horses and his business to the son of a wealthy farmer, moved into his uncle's house, on which he spent considerable sums in improvements and repairs. So Minoret condemned himself to live within a few yards of Ursule.

"I only hope," said he to Dionis the day when Savinien and his mother had notice of the foreclosure, "that now we shall be rid of this precious nobility. We will turn them out, one by one."

"The old lady, with her fourteen quarterings, will not stay to witness the disaster," said Goupil. "She will go to die in Brittany, where, no doubt, she will find a wife for her son."

"I don't think so," replied the notary, who, that morning, had drawn up the agreement of purchase for Bongrand. "Ursule has just bought the widow Richard's little house."

"That cursed little fool does not know what to do next to annoy us!" cried Minoret, very rashly.

"Why, what can it matter to you if she lives at Nemours?" asked Goupil, astonished at the vehement disgust shown by the great simpleton.

"Do you not know," said Minoret, turning as red as a poppy, "that my son is fool enough to be in love with her? I would give a hundred crowns to see Ursule well out of Nemours."

From this it is easy to understand how much Ursule, poor and resigned as she was, would be in Minoret's way, with all his money. The worry of securities to be realized, of selling his business, the expeditions consequent on such unwonted affairs, his disputes with his wife over every little detail, and the purchase of the doctor's house, where Zélie wished to live quite plainly for her son's sake,—all this turmoil, so unlike the quiet course of his usual life, prevented the great Minoret from thinking of his victim. But a few days after

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he had settled in the Rue des Bourgeois, about the middle of May, on returning from a walk, he heard the sounds of a piano, and saw La Bougival sitting in the window, like a dragon guarding a treasure; and at the same moment he heard an importunate voice within himself.

An explanation of the reason why, in a man of his temper, the sight of Ursule, who did not even suspect the theft he had committed to her injury, became at once unendurable, why the sight of her dignity in misfortune filled him with the desire to get her out of the town, and why this desire assumed the character of hatred and passion, would lead perhaps to a complete moral treatise. Perhaps he felt that he was not the legitimate possessor of the thirty-six thousand francs while she to whom they belonged was so close to him. Perhaps he thought that by some chance his theft would be discovered, so long as those he had robbed were within reach. Perhaps, even, in a nature so primitive, so rough-hewn as his was, and hitherto always law-abiding, Ursule's presence awoke some kind of remorse. Perhaps this remorse was the more poignant because he had so much more wealth that had been legitimately acquired.

He no doubt ascribed these stirrings of his conscience wholly to Ursule's presence, fancying that if she were out of sight these uncomfortable pangs would vanish too. Or perhaps, again, crime has its own counsel of perfection. An ill deed begun may demand its climax, a first blow may require a second—a deathblow. Robbery, perhaps, inevitably leads to murder. Minoret had committed the theft without a moment's pause for reflection, events had crowded on so swiftly; reflection came afterwards. Now, if the reader has fully pictured the appearance and build of this man, he will understand the prodigious results on him of an idea. Remorse is more than an idea; it is the outcome of a feeling which can no more be smothered than love can, and which is tyrannous too. But just as Minoret had not hesitated for an instant to possess himself of the fortune intended for Ursule, so he mechanically felt the need of getting her away from

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Nemours when the sight of her cheated innocence stung him. Being an imbecile, he never considered consequences; he went on from danger to danger, urged by his instinctive cupidity, like a wild animal which cannot foresee the wiles of the hunter, and trusts to its swiftness and strength.

Before long the richer townspeople, who were wont to meet at the notary's office, observed a change in the manners and demeanor of the man who had always been so light-hearted.

"I cannot think what has come over Minoret," said his wife, to whom he had never revealed his bold stroke. "He is all anyhow."

The world at large accounted for Minoret's being sick of himself—for in his face the expression of thought was one of boredom—by the fact that he had absolutely nothing to do, and by the transition from an active to an indolent life. While Minoret was scheming to crush Ursule's life, La Bougival never let a day pass without making to her foster-child some allusion to the fortune she ought to have had, or comparing her humble lot with that which the late "monsieur" had intended her to enjoy, and of which he had spoken to her—La Bougival.

"And besides," said she, "it is not out of greediness; but would not monsieur, so kind as he was, have left me some little money?"

"Am I not here?" Ursule would reply, and forbid any further words on the subject.

She could not bear the taint of any self-interested thought to touch the loving, melancholy, and sweet memories which clung round the image of the old doctor, of whom a sketch in black and white chalk, done by her drawing-master, hung in her little sitting-room. To her fresh and strong imagination the sight of this sketch was sufficient to bring her godfather before her; she thought of him constantly, and was surrounded by the objects he had loved—his deep armchair, the furniture of his study, his backgammon board, and the piano he had given her. The two old friends who remained to her, the Abbé Chaperon and Monsieur Bongrand, the only

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persons whose visits she would receive, were like two living memories of the past in the midst of the objects to which her regrets almost gave life—of that past which was linked to the present by the love which her godfather had approved and blessed.

Ere long the sadness of her thoughts, insensibly softened by time, cast its hue on all her life, bringing everything into indefinable harmony; exquisite neatness, perfect order in the arrangement of the furniture, a few flowers brought every morning by Savinien, pretty nothings, a stamp of peace set on everything by the young girl's habits, and which made her home attractive. After breakfast and after church she regularly practised and sang; then she took her embroidery, sitting in the window towards the street. At four o'clock Savinien, on his return from the walk he took in all weather, would find the window half open, and sit on the outer sill to chat with her for half-an-hour. In the evening the curé or the Justice would call, but she would never allow Savinien to accompany them. Nor would she accept a proposal from Madame de Portenduère, whom her son persuaded to invite Ursule to live with her.

The young girl and La Bougival lived with the strictest economy; they did not spend, on all included, more than sixty francs a month. The old nurse was indefatigable; she washed and ironed, she cooked only twice a week, and kept the remains of the cooked food, which the mistress and maid ate cold; for Ursule hoped to save seven hundred francs a year to pay the remainder of the price of her house. This austere conduct, with her modesty and resignation to a penurious life, after having enjoyed a luxurious existence, when her lightest whims were worshiped, gained her the regard of certain persons. She was respected, and never talked about. The heirs, once satisfied, did her full justice. Savinien admired such strength of character in so young a girl. Now and again, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère would say a few kind words to Ursule; she invited her to dinner twice,

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and came herself to fetch her. If it were not indeed happiness, at any rate it was peace.

But a successful transaction, in which the Justice displayed his old skill as a lawyer, brought to a head Minoret's persecution of Ursule, which had hitherto smouldered, and not gone beyond covert ill-will. As soon as the old doctor's estate was fairly settled, the Justice, at Ursule's entreaty, took up the cause of the Portenduères, and undertook to get them out of their difficulties; but, in calling on the old lady, whose opposition to Ursule's happiness made him furious, he did not conceal from her that he was devoting himself to her interests solely to please Mademoiselle Mirouët. He selected one of his former clerks to plead for the Portenduères at Fontainebleau, and himself conducted the appeal, for a decree against the foreclosure. He intended to take advantage of the interval of time which must elapse between the granting of this decree and Massin's renewed appeal to re-let the farm at a rent of six thousand francs, and to extract from the lessee a good premium and the payment of a year's rent in advance. Thenceforth the whist parties met again at Madame de Portenduère's, consisting of himself and the curé, Savinien and Ursule, for whom the Justice and the Abbé called every evening, and they saw her home again.

In June, Bongrand got his decree annulling the proceedings taken by Massin against the Portenduères. He at once signed a new lease; got thirty-two thousand francs from the farmer, and a rent of six thousand francs a year for eight years; then, in the evening, before the transactions could get abroad, he went to Zélie, who, as he knew, was puzzled for an investment for her savings, and suggested to her that she should buy Bordières for two hundred and twenty thousand francs.

"I would clinch the bargain on the spot," said Minoret, "if only I were sure that the Portenduères were going to live anywhere than at Nemours."

"Why?" asked the Justice.

"We want to be quit of nobles at Nemours."

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"I fancy I have heard the old lady say that if she could settle matters, she could live nowhere but in Brittany on what would be left. She talks of selling her house."

"Well, sell it to me then," said Minoret.

"But you talk as if the money were yours!" said Zélie. "What are you going to do with two houses?"

"If I do not settle the matter of the farm with you this evening," said the Justice, "our lease will become known; we shall have fresh proceedings against us in three days, and I shall fail to pull the thing through. My heart is set on it; I shall go on, this very hour, to Melun, where some farmers I know will take Bordières off my hands with their eyes shut. Then you will have lost the opportunity of an investment at three per cent in the district of le Rouvre."

"And why then did you come to us?" said Zélie.

"Because I know you to be rich, while my older clients will want a few days to enable them to hand over a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs. I want no delays."

"Get *her* away from Nemours, and they are yours!" said Minoret.

"You must see that I cannot pledge the Portenduères in any way," replied Bongrand, "but I feel sure that they will not remain at Nemours."

On this assurance Minoret, to whom Zélie gave a nudge, undertook to pay off the Portenduères' debt to the doctor's estate. The contract for the sale was made out by Dionis, and the Justice, very content, made Minoret agree to the terms of the renewed lease, though he perceived rather late, as well as Zélie, that the rent was payable a year in advance, leaving the last year, in point of fact, rent free.

By the end of June, Bongrand could take Madame de Portenduère a receipt in full and the remnant of her fortune, a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs, which he advised her to invest in State securities at five per cent, as well as Savinien's ten thousand; this yielded an income of about six thousand francs a year. Thus, instead of having lost, the old lady had gained two thousand francs a year by the

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sale of her estate. She and her son therefore remained at Nemours.

Minoret thought he had been tricked, as if the Justice could possibly have known that it was Ursule's presence that was intolerable to him, and felt a deep resentment, which added to his hatred of his victim. Then began the covert drama, terrible in its effects, the struggle between two persons' feelings; Minoret's, which prompted him to drive Ursule to leave Nemours; and Ursule's, which gave her the fortitude to endure a persecution of which the cause for long remained inexplicable, a singular state of things to which previous events had all led up and conduced, and to which they had been the prologue.

Madame Minoret, to whom her husband presented plate and a dinner service worth altogether twenty thousand francs, gave a handsome dinner every Sunday, the day on which her son brought friends over from Fontainebleau. For these banquets Zélie would send for some rare dainties from Paris, thus inciting Dionis the notary to imitate her display. Goupil, whom the Minorets did their utmost to banish as a man of ill-repute and a blot on their magnificence, was not invited to the house till the end of July, a month after the retirement into private ease of the old postmaster and mistress. The clerk, quite alive to this deliberate neglect, was obliged to treat even Désiré with formality, and drop the familiar *tu;* and Désiré, since his appointment to official life, had assumed a grave and haughty air even among his family.

"You have forgotten Esther, then, since you are in love with Mademoiselle Mirouët?" said Goupil to the young lawyer.

"In the first place, Esther is dead, monsieur. And in the second, I never thought of Ursule," was the reply.

"Hey day—what did you tell me, Daddy Minoret?" cried Goupil audaciously.

Minoret, caught in the very act by so formidable a foe, would have been put out of countenance but for the scheme for which he had invited Goupil to dinner, remembering the

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proposal formerly made by the clerk to hinder Ursule's marriage to young Portenduère. His only answer was to lead the clerk abruptly away and out into the garden.

"You are nearly eight-and-twenty, my good fellow," said he, "and I do not see that you are on the highroad to fortune. I wish you well; for, after all, you were my son's companion. Listen to me: If you can persuade that little Mirouët to become your wife—she has forty thousand francs at any rate—as sure as my name is Minoret, I will give you the money to buy a business at Orleans."

"No," said Goupil, "I should never become known. At Montargis——"

"No," interrupted Minoret, "but at Sens——"

"Very good, say Sens," replied the hideous clerk. "It is an archbishop's see, and I have no objection to a religious centre. A little hypocrisy helps one to get on. Besides, the girl is very pious; she will be a success there."

"It must be quite understood that I only give the hundred thousand francs in consideration of my young relative's marriage. I wish to provide for her out of regard for my deceased uncle."

"And why not out of regard for me?" said Goupil mischievously, for he suspected some secret motive for Minoret's conduct. "Was it not information given by me that enabled you to get twenty-four thousand francs in rent from a single holding in a ring fence round the Château du Rouvre? With your meadows and mill on the other side of the Loing you can add sixteen thousand to that. Come, old Burly, will you play your game with me above board?"

"Yes."

"Well, just to make you feel my claws, I was brewing a plan with Massin to get possession of le Rouvre—park, gardens, preserves, timber, and all."

"You had better!" exclaimed Zélie, interrupting them.

"Well," said Goupil, with a viperine glance at her, "if I choose, Massin will have it all to-morrow for two hundred thousand francs."

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"Leave us, wife," said the colossus, taking Zélie by the arm, and turning her about. "We understand each other.—We have had so much business on our hands," he went on, coming back to Goupil, "that we have not been able to think of you; but I rely on your friendship to let us get le Rouvre."

"An old Marquisate," said Goupil slily, "which in your hands would soon be worth fifty thousand francs a year—more than two millions at the present price of money."

"And then our boy can marry the daughter of a Marshal of France, or the heiress of some ancient house, which will help him on to be a judge in Paris," said the postmaster, opening his huge snuff-box, and offering it to Goupil.

"Well, then, all is square and above board?" asked Goupil, shaking his fingers.

Minoret wrung his hand and said:

"My word of honor."

Like all cunning men, the clerk fancied, happily for Minoret, that this marriage with Ursule was a mere excuse for making up to him, now he had been playing off Massin against them.

"It is not his doing," said he to himself. "I know my Zélie's hand; she has taught him his part. Bah! Let Massin slide! Within three years I shall be returned as député for Sens," he thought.

Then, catching sight of Bongrand on his way to his game of whist over the way, he rushed into the street.

"You take a great interest in Ursule Mirouët, my dear Monsieur Bongrand," said he; "you cannot be indifferent to her future prospects. This is our programme. She may marry a notary whose business is to be in a large district town. This notary, who will certainly be député in three years, will settle a hundred thousand francs on her."

"She can do better," said Bongrand stiffly. "Since Madame de Portenduère's misfortunes her health is failing. Yesterday she looked dreadfully ill; she is dying of grief. Savinien will have six thousand francs a year; Ursule has forty thousand francs; I will invest their capital on Massin's prin-

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ciple—but honestly—and in ten years they will have a little fortune."

"Savinien would be a fool. He can marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre any day he likes, an only daughter, to whom her uncle and aunt will also leave splendid fortunes."

"'When love has got hold of us, farewell prudence',"says la Fontaine. "But who is your notary, for, after all——?" said Bongrand, out of curiosity.

"I," said Goupil, in a tone that made the Justice start.

"You?" said he, not attempting to conceal his disgust.

"Very good, sir; your servant," retorted Goupil, with a glare of venom, hatred, and defiance.

"Would you like to be the wife of a notary who will settle a hundred thousand francs on you?" cried Bongrand, entering the little sitting-room, and speaking to Ursule, who was sitting by Madame de Portenduère. Ursule and Savinien started as if by one impulse, and looked at each other; she with a smile, he not daring to show his uneasiness.

"I am not my own mistress," replied Ursule, holding out her hand to Savinien in such a way that his old mother could not see it.

"I refused the offer without consulting you even."

"But why?" said Madame de Portenduère. "It seems to me, my dear, that a notary's profession is a very respectable one."

"I prefer my peaceful poverty," she replied, "for it is opulence in comparison with what I had a right to expect of life. My old nurse spares me many anxieties, and I would not exchange my present lot, which suits me, for an unknown future."

Next morning the post brought a poisoned dart to two hearts in the shape of two anonymous letters—one to Madame de Portenduère, and one to Ursule. This is the letter received by the old lady:

"You love your son, you would wish to see him married as beseems the name he bears, and you are fostering his fancy

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for an ambitious little thing without any fortune, by receiving at your house one Ursule, the daughter of a regimental bandmaster; while you might marry him to Mademoiselle du Rouvre, whose two uncles, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Chevalier du Rouvre, each having thirty thousand francs a year, intend to settle a large sum on their niece on her marriage, so as not to leave their fortune to her foolish old father, M. du Rouvre, who wastes his substance. Madame de Sérizy—Aunt Clémentine du Rouvre—who has just lost her only son in Algiers, will no doubt also adopt her niece. Some one who wishes you well believes that Savinien would be accepted."

This is the letter written to Ursule:

"DEAR URSULE,—There is in Nemours a young man who idolizes you; he cannot see you at work at your window without such emotions as prove to him that his love is for life. This young man is gifted with a will of iron and a perseverance which nothing can daunt. Accept his love with favor, for his intentions are of the purest, and he humbly asks your hand in the hope of making you happy. His fortune, though suitable even now, is nothing to what he will make it when you are his wife. You will some day be received at Court as the wife of a minister, and one of the first ladies in the land. As he sees you every day, though you cannot see him, place one of La Bougival's pots of pinks in your window, and that will tell him that he may appear before you."

Ursule burnt this letter without mentioning it to Savinien. Two days later she received another, in these terms:

"You were wrong, dear Ursule, not to reply to him who loves you better than his life. You fancy you will marry Savinien, but you are strangely mistaken. That marriage will never take place. Madame de Portenduère, who will see you no more at her house, is going this morning to le Rouvre, on foot, in spite of the weak state she is in, to ask Mademoiselle du Rouvre in marriage for Savinien. He will finally yield. What objection can he make? The young lady's uncles will settle their fortune on their niece at her marriage. That fortune amounts to sixty thousand francs a year."

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This letter tortured Ursule's heart by making her acquainted with the torments of jealousy, pangs hitherto unknown, which, to her finely organized nature, so alive to suffering, swamped the present, the future, and even the past in grief. From the moment when she received this fatal missive, she sat motionless in the doctor's armchair, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and lost in a sorrowful reverie. In an instant the chill of death had come on her instead of the glow of exquisite life. Alas! It was worse; it was, in fact, the dreadful awakening of the dead to find that there is no God—the masterpiece of that strange genius Jean Paul. Four times did La Bougival try to persuade Ursule to eat her breakfast; she saw the girl take up her bread and lay it down again, unable to carry it to her lips. When she ventured to offer a remonstrance, Ursule stopped her with a wave of the hand, saying Hush! in a terrible tone, as despotic as it had hitherto always been sweet. La Bougival, watching her mistress through a glass door between the rooms, saw her turn alternately as red as if fever were consuming her, and then blue, as though an ague fit had followed the fever. By about four o'clock, when Ursule rose every few minutes to look whether Savinien were coming, and Savinien came not, she became evidently worse. Jealousy and doubt destroy all the bashfulness of love. Ursule, who till now had never allowed her passion to be detected in the least gesture, put on her hat and her little shawl, and ran into the passage to go out and meet Savinien; but a remnant of reserve brought her back into the little sitting-room. There she wept.

When the curé came in the evening, the poor old nurse stopped him on the threshold.

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé, I do not know what ails Mademoiselle; she——"

"I know," said the priest sadly, silencing the frightened attendant.

The Abbé then told Ursule what she had not dared to ask: "Madame de Portenduère had gone to dine at le Rouvre."

"And Savinien?"

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"He too."

Ursule shuddered nervously—a shudder which thrilled the Abbé Chaperon as though he had received a shock from a Leyden jar, and he felt a painful turmoil at his heart.

"So we shall not go to her house this evening," said he. "But, indeed, my child, you will be wise never to go there again. The old lady might receive you in a way that would wound your pride. We, having brought her to listen to the idea of your marriage to Savinien, cannot imagine what ill-wind has blown to change her views in an instant."

"I am prepared for anything; nothing can astonish me now," said Ursule in a tone of conviction. "In such extremities it is a great comfort to feel that I have done nothing to offend God."

"Submit, my dear daughter, and never try to inquire into the ways of Providence," said the curé.

"I do not wish to show any unjust suspicion of M. de Portenduère's character——"

"Why do you no longer call him Savinien?" asked the Abbé, observing a certain bitterness in Ursule's tone.

"My dear Savinien!" she went on, with a burst of tears. "Yes, my good friend," she said, sobbing, "a voice assures me that his heart is as noble as his birth. He has not merely told me that he loves me; he has proved it in a thousand delicate ways, and by heroically controlling the ardor of his passion. Lately, when he took my hand that I held out to him, when Monsieur Bongrand proposed to me for a notary, I declare to you that it was the first time I had ever offered it to him. Though he began, indeed, by a jest, blowing me a kiss across the street, since then our affection has never once, as you know, overstepped the strictest limits; but I may tell you—you who read my whole soul excepting the one spot which is open only to the angels—well, this affection is in me the foundation of many virtues. It has enabled me to accept my poverty; it has, perhaps, softened the bitterness of the irreparable loss for which I mourn now more in my garments than in my heart! Yes, I have done wrong—for my love has

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been greater than my gratitude to my godfather; and God has avenged him! How could I help it? What I valued myself for was as Savinien's wife. I have been too proud; and it is that pride, perhaps, that God is punishing. God alone, as you have often told me, ought to be the spring and end of all we do."

The curé was touched as he saw the tears rolling down her cheeks, already paler. The greater the poor girl's confidence had been, the lower she had fallen.

"However," she went on, "reduced once more to my orphaned state, I shall be able to accustom myself to the proper frame of mind. After all, could I bear to be a stone round the neck of the man I love? What should he do here? Who am I that I should aspire to him? Do I not love him with such perfect love that it is equal to a complete sacrifice of my happiness, of my hopes? And you know I have often blamed myself for setting my love on a tomb, and looking forward to the morrow of that old lady's death. If Savinien can be rich and happy through another woman, I have just money enough to purchase my admission to a convent, to which I shall at once retire. There ought not to be two loves in a woman's heart, any more than there are two Lords in heaven. The religious life will have its charms for me."

"He could not allow his mother to go alone to le Rouvre," said the kind priest gently.

"We will talk no more of it, my dear Monsieur Chaperon. I will write to him this evening to give him his liberty. I am glad to be obliged to close the windows of my sitting-room."

She then told him about the anonymous letters, saying that she would offer no encouragement to this unknown suitor.

"Ah! it is an anonymous letter that has prompted Madame de Portenduère's expedition to le Rouvre!" exclaimed the curé. "You are, no doubt, the object of some malignant persecution."

"But why? Neither Savinien nor I have injured any one, and we are doing no harm to any one here."

"Well, well, my child. We will take advantage of this

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tornado which has broken up our little party to arrange our poor old friend's books; they are still piled in disorder. Bongrand and I will set them straight, for we had thought of hunting through them. Put your trust in God; but remember, too, that in the Justice and myself you have two devoted friends."

"And that is much," she said, walking to the end of the little alley with the priest, and craning her neck like a bird looking out of its nest, still hoping to see Savinien.

At this instant Minoret and Goupil, coming home from a walk in the country, stopped as they were passing, and the heir-at-law said to Ursule:

"What is the matter, cousin?—for we are still cousins, are we not? You look altered."

Goupil cast such ardent eyes on Ursule that she was frightened. She ran in without replying.

"She is a wild bird," said Minoret to the curé.

"Mademoiselle Mirouët is quite right not to talk to men on her doorstep; she is too young . . ."

"Oh!" said Goupil; "you must be well aware that she does not lack lovers!"

The curé bowed hastily, and hurried off to the Rue des Bourgeois.

"Well," said the lawyer's clerk to Minoret, "the fat is burning. She is as pale as death already; within a fortnight she will have left the town. You will see."

"It is better to have you for a friend than for an enemy," said Minoret, struck by the horrible smile which gave to Goupil's face the diabolical expression which Joseph Bridau gave to Goethe's Mephistopheles.

"I believe you!" replied Goupil. "If she will not marry me, I will make her die of grief."

"Do so, boy, and I will give you money enough to start in business in Paris. Then you can marry a rich wife——"

"Poor girl!—why, what harm has she done you?" asked the clerk in some surprise.

"I am sick of her," said Minoret roughly.

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"Only wait till Monday, and you shall see how I will make her squirm," replied Goupil, studying the postmaster's countenance.

Next morning La Bougival went to see Savinien, and as she gave him a note, she said, "I don't know what the dear child has written you about; but she looks like a corpse this morning."

Who, on reading this letter to Savinien, can fail to picture the sufferings Ursule must have endured during the past night?

"My Dear Savinien,—Your mother wishes you to marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre, I am told; and perhaps she is right. You see yourself between a life almost of poverty and a position of wealth, between the wife of your heart and a woman of fashion, between obedience to your mother and obedience to your own choice—for I still believe that I am your choice. Savinien, since you must decide, I wish that you should do so in perfect freedom. I give you back your word—given not to me, but to yourself, at a moment which I can never forget, and which, like all the days that have passed since then, was angelically pure and sweet. That memory will be enough for me to live on. If you should persist in adhering to your vows, a dark and dreadful thought would always trouble my happiness. In the midst of our privations, which you now take so lightly, you might afterwards reflect that, if you had but followed the rules of the world, things might have been very different with you. If you were the man to utter such a thought, it would be my death-warrant in bitter anguish; and if you did not say it, I should be suspicious of the slightest cloud on your brow. Dear Savinien, I have always cared for you more than for anything on earth. I might do so; for my godfather, though jealous of you, said to me, 'Love him, my child! you will certainly be his, and he yours some day.' When I went to Paris I loved you without hope, and that love was enough for me. I do not know whether I can revert to that state of mind,

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but I will try. What are we to each other at this moment! A brother and sister. Let us remain so. Marry the happy girl, whose joy it will be to restore to your name the lustre due it, which I, according to your mother, must tarnish. You shall never hear me mentioned. The world will applaud you; I, believe me, shall never blame you, and shall always love you. So, farewell."

"Wait!" cried the young man. He made La Bougival sit down, and hastily wrote these few lines:

"My Dear Ursule,—Your letter breaks my heart, for you are inflicting on yourself much useless pain, and for the first time our hearts have failed to understand each other. That you are not already my wife is because I cannot yet marry without my mother's consent. After all, are not eight thousand francs a year, in a pretty cottage on the banks of the Loing, quite a fortune? We calculated that, with La Bougival, we could save five thousand francs a year. You allowed me one evening in your uncle's garden to regard you as my promised wife, and you cannot by yourself alone break the ties which bind us both. Need I tell you that I plainly declared, yesterday, to Monsieur du Rouvre that, even if I were free, I would not accept a fortune from a young lady whom I did not know? My mother refuses to see you any more; I lose the happiness of my evenings, but do not abridge the brief moments when I may speak with you at your window. Till this evening, then—— Nothing can part us."

"Go now, my good woman. She must not have a moment's needless anxiety."

That afternoon, on his return from the walk he took every day on purpose to pass by Ursule's dwelling, Savinien found her somewhat the paler for all these sudden agitations.

"I feel as though I had never till this moment known what a happiness it is to see you!" said she.

"You yourself said to me," replied Savinien, with a smile,

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"that 'Love cannot exist without patience; I will wait'—for I remember all your words. But have you, my dear child, divided love from faith? Ah! this is the end of all our differences. You have always said that you loved me more than I could love you. But have I ever doubted you?" he asked, giving her a bunch of wildflowers chosen so as to symbolize his feelings.

"You have no reason to doubt me," she replied. "Besides, you do not know all," she added, in a tone of uneasiness.

She had given orders that no letters to her by post should be taken in. But without her being able to guess by what conjuring trick the thing had been done, a few minutes after Savinien had left her, and she had watched him round the turning of the Rue des Bourgeois out of the High Street, she found on her armchair a piece of paper on which was written:

"Tremble! The lover scorned will be worse than a tiger."

Notwithstanding Savinien's entreaties, she would not, out of prudence, trust him with the dreadful secret of her fears. The ineffable joy of seeing him again, after believing him lost to her, could alone enable her to forget the mortal chill which came over her. Every one knows the intolerable torment of awaiting an indefinite misfortune. Suffering then assumes the proportions of the unknown, which is certainly infinitude, to the mind. To Ursule it was the greatest anguish. She found herself starting violently at the slightest sound; she distrusted the silence; she suspected the walls of conspiracies. Her peaceful sleep was broken. Goupil, without knowing anything of her constitution—as fragile as that of a flower—had, by the instinct of wickedness, hit on the poison that would blight it—kill it.

The next day, however, passed without any shock. Ursule played the piano till very late, and went to bed almost reassured, and overpowered by sleep. At about midnight she was roused by a band, consisting of a clarionet, a hautbois, a flute, a cornet-à-piston, a trombone, a bassoon, a fife, and a triangle. All the neighbors were at their windows. The.

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poor child, upset by seeing a crowd in the street, was struck to the heart on hearing a hoarse, vulgar, man's voice crying out:

"For the fair Ursule Mirouët, a serenade from her lover!"

At church next morning all the town was in a hubbub; and as Ursule entered and quitted the church, she saw the Square filled with groups staring at her, and displaying the most odious curiosity. The serenade had set every tongue wagging, for every one was lost in conjecture. Ursule got home more dead than alive, and went out no more, the curé having advised her to say vespers at home. On going in she saw, lying in the passage paved with red brick that ran from the street to the courtyard behind, a letter that had been slipped under the door; she picked it up and read it, prompted by the desire for some explanation. The least sensitive reader can imagine her feelings as she saw these terrible words:

"Make up your mind to be my wife, rich and adored. I will have you. If you are not mine alive, you shall be, dead. You may ascribe to your refusal misfortunes which will not fall on you alone.—HE WHO LOVES YOU AND WILL SOME DAY POSSESS YOU."

Strange irony! at the moment when the gentle victim of this conspiracy was drooping like a plucked flower, Mesdemoiselles Massin, Dionis, and Crémière were envying her lot.

"She is a happy girl," they were saying. "Men are devoted to her, flatter her taste, are ready to quarrel for her. The serenade was delightful, it would seem! There was a cornet-à-piston!"

"What is a cornet-à-piston?"

"A new sort of musical instrument—there—as long as that!" said Angélique Crémière to Paméla Massin.

Early next day Savinien went off to Fontainebleau to inquire who had ordered the musicians of the regiment sta-

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tioned there; but as there were two men to each instrument, it was impossible to ascertain which had gone to Nemours, since the Colonel prohibited them from playing for private persons without his leave. Monsieur de Portenduère had an interview with the public prosecutor, Ursule's legal guardian, and explained to him the serious effect such scenes must have on a young girl so delicate and fragile as she was, begging him to find out the instigator of this serenade by means that the law could set in motion.

Three days later, in the middle of the night, a second serenade was given by three violins, a flute, a guitar, and a hautbois. On this occasion the musicians made off by the road to Montargis, where there was just then a troupe of actors. Between two pieces a strident and drunken voice had proclaimed:

"To the daughter of Bandmaster Mirouët."

Thus all Nemours was apprised of the profession of Ursule's father, the secret the old doctor had so carefully kept.

But this time Savinien did not go to Montargis; he received in the course of the day an anonymous letter from Paris containing this terrible prophecy:

"You shall not marry Ursule. If you wish her to live, make haste and surrender her to him who loves her more than you do; for he has become a musician and an artist to please her, and would rather see her dead than as your wife."

By this time the town doctor of Nemours was seeing Ursule three times a day, for this covert persecution had brought her to the point of death. Plunged, as she felt herself, by a diabolical hand into a slough of mud, the gentle girl behaved like a martyr; she lay perfectly silent, raising her eyes to heaven without tears, awaiting further blows with fervent prayer, and hoping for the stroke that might be her death.

"I am glad to be unable to go downstairs," said she to Monsieur Bongrand and the Abbé, who stayed with her as much as possible. "*He* would come, and I feel unworthy to meet the looks with which he is in the habit of making me blest. Do you think he doubts me?"

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"Why, if Savinien cannot discover the moving spirit of all this shameful business, he means to ask for the intervention of the Paris police," said Bongrand.

"The unknown persons must know that they have killed me," she replied. "They will be quiet now."

The curé, Bongrand, and Savinien puzzled themselves with conjectures and suppositions. Savinien, Tiennette, La Bougival, and two devoted adherents of the curé's constituted themselves spies, and were constantly on the watch for a whole week; but Goupil could never be betrayed by a sign, he pulled all the wires with his own hand. The Justice was the first to suspect that the author of the evil was frightened at his own success. Ursule was as pale and weak as a consumptive English girl. The spies relaxed their efforts. There were no more serenades nor letters. Savinien ascribed the cessation of these odious means to the secret energy of the law-officers, to whom he had sent the letters written to Ursule, to himself, and to his mother.

The armistice was of no long duration. When the doctor had checked the course of Ursule's nervous fever, just as she was recovering her spirit, one morning, about the middle of July, a ladder of ropes was found attached to her window. The postilion who had ridden with the night mail deposed that a little man was in the act of coming down it just as he was passing; but in spite of his wishing to stop, his horses, having set off down hill from the bridge, at the corner of which stood Ursule's little house, had carried him some way out of Nemours.

An opinion, suggested in Dionis' drawing-room, attributed these manœuvres to the Marquis du Rouvre, at that time in great need of money, who, it was supposed, by hastening Savinien's marriage with his daughter, would be able to save the Château of le Rouvre from his creditors. Madame de Portenduère also, it was said, looked with favor on anything that could discredit, dishonor, and blight Ursule; but when the young girl seemed likely to die, the old lady was almost conquered.

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This last stroke of malice so much distressed the Curé Chaperon that it made him ill enough to compel him to remain at home for some days. Poor Ursule, in whom this cruel attack had brought on a relapse, received by post a note from the curé, which was not refused, as his writing was familiar.

"My child, leave Nemours, and so discomfit the malice of your unknown enemies. Perhaps what they aim at is to imperil Savinien's life. I will tell you more when I can go to see you." This note was signed, "Your devoted friend Chaperon."

When Savinien, almost driven mad, went to call on the priest, the poor man read and re-read the letter, so much was he horrified at the perfection with which his writing and signature had been imitated, for he had written nothing, and, if he had written, he would not have employed the post to carry a letter to Ursule. The mortal anguish to which this last villainy reduced Ursule compelled Savinien once more to apply to the public prosecutor, showing him the forged letter from the Abbé.

"It is murder," said the young man to the lawyer. "Murder is being committed by means not provided against by law, on the person of an orphan placed under your protection by the Civil Code."

"If you can discover any means of interfering," replied the public prosecutor, "I am ready to adopt them; but I know of none. This rascally anonymous letter gives the best advice. Mademoiselle Mirouët must be sent to the care of the Ladies of the Adoration. Meanwhile, by my order, the commissary of police at Fontainebleau will authorize you to carry weapons in your own defence. I myself have been to le Rouvre, and Monsieur du Rouvre is justifiably indignant at the suspicions that have attached to him. Minoret, my deputy's father, is in treaty for the purchase of his château. Mademoiselle du Rouvre is to marry a rich Polish Count. Monsieur du Rouvre himself was about to leave the neighborhood on the day of my visit, to escape being seized for debt."

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Désiré, questioned by his chief, dared not say what he thought; he recognized Goupil in all this. Goupil alone was capable of conducting a plot which should thus shave close to the Penal Code without being amenable to any of its provisions. The impunity, the secrecy, the success of it, increased Goupil's audacity. The terrible man had set Massin, who had become his dupe, on the tracks of the Marquis du Rouvre, to compel that gentleman to sell the rest of his land to Minoret. After opening negotiations with a notary at Sens, he determined to try a last stroke to gain possession of Ursule. He thought he could imitate some young men of Paris, who owed their wife and fortune to an elopement. His services done to Minoret, Massin, and Crémière, and the protection of Dionis, mayor of Nemours, would allow of his hushing the matter up. He at once determined to cast off his mask, believing that Ursule was incapable of resistance in the state of weakness to which he had brought her. However, before risking the last card of his base game, he thought it well to have an explanation at le Rouvre, whither he went with Minoret, who was going there for the first time since the agreement was signed.

Minoret had just received a confidential letter from his son, asking him for information as to what was going on with regard to Ursule, before going himself with the public prosecutor to place her in a convent safe from any further atrocity. The young lawyer besought his father to give him his best advice, if this persecution were the work of one of their friends. Though justice could not always punish, she would at last find everything out and make good note of it. Minoret had achieved his great end; he was now the immovable owner of the Château du Rouvre, one of the finest in all the Gatinais, and he could derive forty odd thousand francs a year from the rich and beautiful land surrounding the park. The colossus could laugh at Goupil now. Moreover, he meant to live in the country, where the memory of Ursule would haunt him no more.

"My boy," said he to Goupil, as they paced the terrace, "leave my little cousin in peace!"

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"Pooh!" said the clerk, who could make nothing of his capricious behavior, for even stupidity has its depths.

"Oh, I am not ungrateful: you have helped me to get, for two hundred and eighty thousand francs, this fine mansion of brick and hewn stone, which certainly could not now be built for nearly five times the price, with the home farm, the park, the gardens, and timber—Well, yes, I will, on my word —I will give you ten per cent—twenty thousand francs, with which you can buy a bailiff's practice at Nemours. And I guarantee your marriage with one of the Crémière girls—the elder."

"The one who talked of the cornet-à-piston?" cried Goupil.

"But her mother will give her thirty thousand francs," said Minoret. "You see, my boy, you were born to be a bailiff, just as I was made to be a postmaster, and we must all obey our vocation."

"Very well," said Goupil, fallen from his high hopes, "here are the stamps; sign me bills for twenty thousand francs, that I may make my bargain cash in hand."

Eighteen thousand francs were due to Minoret, the half-yearly interest on securities of which his wife knew nothing; he thought he should thus be rid of Goupil, and he signed the bills. Goupil, seeing this huge and stupid Machiavelli of the Rue des Bourgeois in a fit of seignorial fever, took leave of him with an "Au revoir," and a look that would have made any one but a parvenu simpleton tremble as he looked down from a high terrace on the gardens, and the handsome roof of a château built in the style fashionable under Louis XIII.

"You will not wait for me?" he cried to Goupil, seeing the clerk set out on foot.

"You can pick me up on the road, old man," replied the prospective bailiff, thirsting for vengeance, and curious to know the answer to the riddle presented to his mind by the strangely tortuous conduct of this old man.

Ever since the day when the most infamous calumny had darkened her life, Ursule, a prey to one of those unac-

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countable maladies whose seat is in the soul, was hastening to the grave. Excessively pale, speaking rarely a few weak, slow words, looking about her with a gentle, indifferent gaze, everything in her appearance, even her brow, showed that she was possessed by a consuming thought. She believed that the ideal crown of pure flowers, with which in every age and nation the brow of a maiden has been supposed to be crowned, had fallen from hers. In the void and silence she seemed to hear the slanderous remarks, the malignant comments, the mean laughter of the little town. The burden was too heavy for her; her innocence was too sensitive to endure such a stoning. She did not complain, a melancholy smile lay on her lips, and her eyes were constantly raised to Heaven as though to appeal to the Lord of Angels against the injustice of men.

When Goupil got back to Nemours, Ursule had been brought down from her room to the ground floor, leaning on the arm of La Bougival and of the doctor. This was in honor of a great event. Madame de Portenduère, having heard that the young girl was dying as the ermine dies, though her honor was less cruelly attacked than that of Clarissa Harlowe, had come to see her and to comfort her. The sight of her son, who had been talking all night of killing himself, had been too much for the old lady. Madame de Portenduère, indeed, found it quite becoming to her dignity to carry encouragement to so pure a creature, and regarded her own visit as an antidote to all the ill done by the gossips of the place. Her opinion, so much more influential, no doubt, than that of the vulgar, would consecrate the power of the nobility.

This step, announced by the Abbé Chaperon, had produced a revulsion in Ursule which revived the hopes of the physician, who had been in despair, and had talked of holding a consultation with the most eminent Paris doctors. Ursule had been placed in her old guardian's armchair, and the character of her beauty was such that in mourning and in suffering she looked more lovely than at any time in her

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happy days. When Savinien came in, with his mother on his arm, the young invalid's color mounted to her cheeks once more.

"Do not rise, my dear," said the old lady, in a tone of command. "However ill and feeble I may be myself, I was determined to come and tell you what I think of all that is going on. I esteem you as the purest, saintliest, and sweetest girl in the Gatinais, and regard you as worthy to make a gentleman of family happy."

At first Ursule could make no reply; she held the withered hands of Savinien's mother, and kissed them, dropping tears upon them.

"Ah, madame!" she answered, in a weak voice, "I should never have been so bold as to think of raising myself so far above my position if I had not been encouraged by promises, and my only claim was a love without limits; but means have been found to separate me for ever from him whom I love. I have been made unworthy of him.—Never!" she exclaimed, with a vehemence of tone that startled the listeners painfully —"never will I consent to give to any man a hand so vilified, a reputation so tarnished! I loved too well. . . . . I may say it now, wreck that I am; I love a creature almost as much as God. And so God——"

"Come, come, child, do not calumniate God. Come, my daughter," said the old lady, making a great effort, "do not exaggerate the importance of an infamous jest which no one believes in. You shall live—I promise it—live and be happy."

"You shall be happy!" cried Savinien, kneeling by Ursule, and kissing her hand. "My mother calls you her daughter!"

"That will do," said the doctor, who was feeling his patient's pulse. "Do not kill her with joy."

At this instant Goupil, who had found the gate into the alley ajar, pushed open the drawing-room door and showed his hideous face, beaming with the thoughts of revenge that had blossomed in his heart in the course of his walk.

"Monsieur de Portenduère," said he, in a voice like the hiss of a viper at bay in its hole.

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"What do you want?" said Savinien, rising.

"I want to say two words to you."

Savinien went out into the passage, and Goupil led him into the yard.

"Swear to me by the life of Ursule whom you love, and by your honor as a gentleman which you prize, so to behave as though there were nothing known between us of what I am going to tell you, and I will explain to you the sole cause of the persecutions turned against Mademoiselle Mirouët."

"Can I put an end to them?"

"Yes."

"Can I be revenged?"

"Yes, on the prime mover—not on the instrument."

"Why?"

"The instrument is—— I am the instrument."

Savinien turned white.

"I just caught sight of Ursule——" the clerk began again.

"Ursule!" said Savinien, with a look at the clerk.

"Mademoiselle Mirouët," said Goupil, made respectful by Savinien's tone; "and I would shed all my blood to undo what has been done. I repent. If you were to kill me in a duel, or in any other way, of what use would my blood be to you? Could you drink it? At this moment it would poison you."

The man's cool reasonableness and his own curiosity quelled Savinien's boiling blood; he glared at this hunchback spoiled, with an eye that made Goupil look down.

"And who set you on the job?" asked the young man.

"You swear?"

"You wish to escape unharmed?"

"I wish that you and Mademoiselle Mirouët should forgive me."

"She will forgive you.—I never will."

"Well, you will forget."

How terrible is the force of logic seconded by interest! Two men, each longing to rend the other, were standing there, close together, in a little yard, forced to speak to each other, united by one feeling in common.

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"I will forgive you, but I shall not forget."

"Of no use whatever," said Goupil, coldly.

Savinien lost patience. He dealt the clerk a slap on the cheek that rang through the yard; it almost upset Goupil, and he himself staggered back.

"I have got no more than I deserve," said Goupil. "I have been a fool. I thought you a finer fellow than you are. You have taken a mean advantage of the opportunity I offered you.—You are in my power now!" he added, with a flash of hatred at Savinien.

"You are a murderer!" exclaimed the gentleman.

"No more than the knife in the assassin's hand," replied Goupil.

"I ask your forgiveness," said Savinien.

"Are you sufficiently revenged?" said the clerk with savage irony. "Will you now rest satisfied?"

"Forgive and forget on both sides," replied Savinien.

"Your hand on it?" said Goupil, holding out his.

"Here it is," said Savinien, swallowing the indignity out of love for Ursule. "But speak: who was behind you?"

Goupil paused, considering the two dishes of the scale, so to speak, with Savinien's slap on one side, and on the other his hatred of Minoret. For two seconds he doubted; then a voice said to him: "You can be a notary!" and he replied, "Forgive and forget? Yes, on both sides, monsieur," and he clasped the gentleman's hand.

"Who is it, then, that is persecuting Ursule?" said Savinien.

"Minoret. He would like to see her dead and buried. Why, I do not know; but we will find out the reason. Do not mix me up in the matter. I can do nothing more for you if once I am suspected. Instead of attacking Ursule, I will defend her; instead of serving Minoret, I will try to spoil his game. I live only to ruin him, to crush him. And I will see him under my feet, I will dance on his dead body, I will make dominoes of his bones! To-morrow, on the walls of Nemours, of Fontainebleau, of le Rouvre, the words shall be

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seen in red chalk—*Minoret is a thief!* Oh, I will do it, by all that is holy! I will blow him to the four winds! Now, we are allies by my having peached. Well, if you like, I will go on my knees to Mademoiselle Mirouët, and tell her that I curse the insane passion which drove me to kill her. I will entreat her to forgive me. That will do her good. The Justice and the curé are there; those two witnesses are enough; but Monsieur Bongrand must pledge his word that he will not damage me in my career. For I have a career now."

"Wait a moment," replied Savinien, quite bewildered by this revelation.

"Ursule, my child," said he, going back to the drawing-room, "the cause of all your misery has lived to feel horror of his work; he repents, and would be glad to ask your pardon in the presence of these gentlemen, on condition that all shall be forgotten."

"What! Goupil?" exclaimed the curé, the Justice, and the doctor in a breath.

"Keep his secret," said Ursule, putting a finger on her lips.

Goupil heard her words, saw the gesture, and it touched him.

"Mademoiselle," he said, with feeling, "I wish that all Nemours might hear me confess to you that a fatal passion turned my head, and suggested to me a series of crimes deserving the blame of all honest folks. What I have said I will repeat everywhere, deploring the evil result of my practical jokes, though they may, in fact, have hurried on your happiness," he added, a little maliciously, as he rose, "since I see Madame de Portenduère here."

"That is right, Goupil," said the curé; "mademoiselle forgives you. But do not forget that you have been very near committing murder."

"Monsieur Bongrand," Goupil went on, turning to the Justice, "I am going this evening to try to bargain with Lecœur for his place as summonsing officer. I hope this confession

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will have done me no injury in your mind, and that you will support my candidature among the superior lawyers, and to the ministry."

The Justice gravely bowed, and Goupil went off to treat for the better of the two appointments in Nemours. The others remained with Ursule, and endeavored that evening to restore calmness and peace in her mind, which was already relieved by the satisfaction given her by the clerk.

"All Nemours shall know it," said Bongrand.

"You see, my child, God was not against you," said the curé.

Minoret returned late from le Rouvre, and dined late. At about nine in the evening he was sitting in his Chinese pavilion digesting his dinner, his wife by his side, and laying plans with her for Désiré's future prospects. Désiré had quite settled down since he had held an appointment; he worked steadily, and had a good chance, it was said, of succeeding the public prosecutor of the district of Fontainebleau, who was to be promoted to Melun. They must find him a wife now, a girl wanting money, but belonging to some old and noble family; then he might rise to a judgeship in Paris. Possibly they might be able to get him elected député for Fontainebleau, where Zélie thought they would do well to settle for the winter, after spending the summer at le Rouvre. Minoret, very much pleased with himself for having arranged everything for the best, had ceased to think of Ursule at the very moment when the drama he had so clumsily begun had become so fatally complicated.

"Monsieur de Portenduère would like to speak to you," said Cabirolle, coming in.

"Bring him here," said Zélie.

The shades of dusk prevented Madame Minoret's seeing her husband suddenly turn pale; he shuddered as he heard Savinien's boots creak on the inlaid flooring of the passage, where the doctor's books had formerly lined the wall. A vague presentiment ran chill through the spoiler's veins.

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Savinien came in. He stood still, keeping his hat on, his stick in his hand, his arms folded—motionless, face to face with the couple.

"I have come to know, Monsieur and Madame Minoret, the reasons which have led you to torture in the most infamous manner the young girl who is, to the knowledge of all Nemours, my future wife; why you have tried to brand her honor; why you wish her dead; and why you have abandoned her to the insults of such a creature as Goupil.—Answer."

"What a queer notion, Monsieur Savinien," said Zélie, "to come and ask us our reasons for a thing which is to us inexplicable! I do not care for Ursule one snap. Since Uncle Minoret's death I have no more given her a thought than to an old smock! I have never breathed her name to Goupil—and a queer rascal he is, whom I would not trust with the interests of my dog.—Well, Minoret, why don't you answer? Are you going to let monsieur attack you and accuse you of rascality that is beneath you? As if a man who has forty-eight thousand francs a year in landed estate round a château fit for a prince would demean himself to such folly! Wake up, man—sitting there like a dummy!"

"I don't know what monsieur would be at," said Minoret at last, in his thin voice, of which the clear accents betrayed its trembling. "What reason could I have for persecuting the girl? I may have said to Goupil that it vexed me to know that she was in Nemours; my son Désiré had taken a fancy to her, and I would not have him marry her, that was all."

"Goupil has confessed everything, Monsieur Minoret."

There was a moment's silence—a terrible moment, while these three persons watched each other. Zélie had detected a nervous movement in the broad face of her colossus.

"Though you are but vermin, I intend to be publicly revenged on you," the young nobleman went on. "I shall not ask satisfaction from you, a man of sixty-seven, for the insults heaped on Mademoiselle Mirouët; but from your son. The first time Monsieur Minoret, junior, sets foot in Nemours, we meet. He has got to fight me, and he shall fight!

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Or he shall be so utterly disgraced that he will not dare to show his face anywhere; if he does not come to Nemours, I will go to Fontainebleau! I will have satisfaction. It shall never be said that you have basely tried to bring shame on a defenceless girl."

"But the calumnies of such a fellow as Goupil—really—are not——" said Minoret.

"Would you like me to confront you with him?" cried Savinien, interrupting him. "Believe me, you had better not noise the matter; it is between you and Goupil and me; leave it so, and God will decide the issue in the duel to which I shall do your son the honor of challenging him."

"But things cannot go on like that!" cried Zélie. "What! Do you suppose that I shall allow Désiré to fight with you, a naval officer, whose business it is to use the sword and pistol! If you have a score against Minoret, here is Minoret; take Minoret, fight with Minoret! But why should my boy, who, by your own confession, is innocent of it all, suffer the penalty? I will set a dog of mine to hinder that, my fine gentleman!—Come, Minoret, there you sit gaping like a great idiot! You are in your own house, and you will allow this young fellow to keep his hat on in your wife's presence! Now, young man, to begin with, take yourself off. Every man's house is his castle. I do not know what you are at with all your rhodomontade, but just turn on your heel; and if you lay a finger on Désiré, you will have me to settle with—you and your precious slut, Ursule."

She rang violently, and called the servants.

"Remember what I have said," repeated Savinien, who, heedless of Zélie's diatribe, went away, leaving this sword of Damocles suspended over their heads.

"Now, Minoret, will you tell me the meaning of all this?" said Zélie to her husband. "A young man does not come into a decent house and kick up all this tremendous dust for nothing, and insist on the blood of an only son and heir."

"It is some trick of that nasty ape Goupil's; I had promised to help him to be made notary if he would get le Rouvre on

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reasonable terms. I gave him ten per cent, twenty thousand francs, in bills of exchange, and I suppose he is not satisfied."

"Yes; but what previous reason can he have had to get up serenades and rascalities to trouble Ursule?"

"He wanted to marry her."

"A girl without a sou? He? Fiddlesticks! Look here, Minoret, you are cramming me with nonsense, and you are by nature too stupid to make it take, my son. There is something behind it all, and you have got to tell it me."

"There is nothing."

"There is nothing? Well, I tell you that is a lie, and we shall see."

"Will you leave me in peace?"

"I will turn on the tap of that barrel of poison, Goupil, whom you know, I think; and you will not get the best of the bargain then."

"As you please."

"Certainly, it will be as I please! And what I please, first and foremost, is that no one shall lay a finger on Désiré; if anything happens to him—there, I tell you, I should do something that would take me to the block. Désiré!—Why!—And there you sit without stirring!"

A quarrel thus begun between Minoret and his wife was not likely to end without long domestic broils. The thieving fool now found his struggle with himself and with Ursule made harder by his blundering, and complicated by a fresh and terrible adversary. Next day, when he went out to go to Goupil, hoping to silence him with money, he read on all the walls: *Minoret is a thief!* Every one he met pitied him, and asked him who was at the bottom of this anonymous placarding, and every one overlooked the evasiveness of his replies by ascribing it to his stupidity. Simpletons gain more advantages from their weakness than clever men get from their strength. We look on at a great man struggling against fate, but we raise a fund for a bankrupt grocer. Do you know why? We feel superior when we protect an idiot, and are aggrieved

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at being no more than equal to the man of genius. A clever man would have been ruined if, like Minoret, he had stammered out preposterous replies with a scared look. Zélie and the servants effaced the libelous inscription wherever they saw it, but it weighed on Minoret's conscience.

Though Goupil had, only the day before, given the summonsing officer his word, he most audaciously refused now to sign the agreement.

"My dear Lecœur, you see I am in a position to buy Dionis' practice, and I can help you to sell yours to some one else. Put your agreement in your pocket again. It is the loss only of a couple of stamps. Here are seventy centimes."

Lecœur was too much afraid of Goupil to make any complaints. All Nemours was forthwith informed that Minoret had offered his guarantee to Dionis to enable Goupil to purchase his place. The budding notary wrote to Savinien retracting all his confession regarding Minoret, and explaining to the young nobleman that his new position, the decisions of the Supreme Court, and his respect for justice forbade his fighting a duel. At the same time, he warned him to take care henceforth how he behaved, as he—Goupil—was practised in kicking, and at the first provocation would have the pleasure of breaking his leg.

The walls of Nemours spoke no more. But the quarrel between Minoret and his wife continued, and Savinien kept angry silence. Within ten days of these events the marriage of the elder Mademoiselle Massin to the future notary was publicly rumored. Mademoiselle Massin had eighty thousand francs and her ugly face; Goupil, his misshapen body and his appointment; so the union seemed suitable and probable.

At midnight, as Goupil was quitting the Massins' house, he was seized in the street by two strangers, who thrashed him soundly and disappeared. Goupil never breathed a word about this nocturnal scene, and gave the lie to an old woman who, looking out of her window, fancied she had recognized him.

All these great little events were watched by the Justice,

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who clearly saw that Goupil had some mysterious power over Minoret, and promised himself that he would find out the reason of it.

Though public opinion in the little town acknowledged Ursule's perfect innocence, she recovered but slowly. In this state of physical prostration, which left her soul and mind free, she became the passive medium of certain phenomena of which the effects indeed were terrible, and of a nature to attract the attention of science, if science had only been taken into the secret. Ten days after Madame de Portenduère's visit, Ursule had a dream which presented the characteristics of a supernatural vision, as much in its moral facts as in its physical conditions, so to speak.

Her godfather, old Doctor Minoret, appeared to her, and signed to her to follow him; she dressed and went with him, through the darkness, as far as the house in the Rue des Bourgeois, where she found everything, to the most trivial details, just as they had been at the time of her godfather's death. The old man wore the clothes he had had on the day before he died; his face was pale, not a sound was heard as he moved; nevertheless, Ursule distinctly heard his voice, though it was faint, as if repeated by a distant echo. The doctor led his ward into the Chinese pavilion, where he made her raise the marble top of the little Boule chiffonier, as she had done the day of his death; but instead of finding nothing there, she saw the letter her godfather had desired her to fetch. She unsealed it and read it, as well as the will in Savinien's favor.

"The letters of the writing," she said to the curé, "shone as though they had been traced with sunbeams; they scorched my eyes."

When she looked up at her uncle to thank him, she saw a kindly smile on his pale lips. Then, in his weak but quite clear voice, the spectre showed her Minoret in the passage listening to his secret, unscrewing the lock, and taking the packet of papers. Then, with his right hand, he took hold of the girl and obliged her to walk with the tread of the dead

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to follow Minoret home to his house. Ursule crossed the town, went into the posting-house, and up to Zélie's room, where the spectre made her see the spoiler unsealing the letters, reading and burning them.

"He could only make the third match burn," said Ursule, "to set light to the papers, and he buried the ashes among the cinders. After that, my godfather took me back to our house, and I saw Monsieur Minoret-Levrault steal into the library, where he took, out of the third volume of the *Pandects*, the three bonds bearing twelve thousand francs a year, as well as the money saved in the house, all in bank notes. Then my guardian said to me: 'All the torments that have brought you to the brink of the grave are his work, but God wills that you should be happy. You will not die yet; you will marry Savinien. If you love me, if you love Savinien, you will ask for the restoration of your fortune by my nephew. Swear that you will.'"

Shining like the Lord at His Transfiguration, the spectre had had such a violent effect on Ursule's mind, in the oppressed state in which she was at the time, that she promised all her uncle asked her to be rid of the nightmare. She woke to find herself standing in the middle of her room, in front of the portrait of her godfather, which she had had brought there when she was ill. She went to bed again, and to sleep after great excitement, remembering this strange vision when she woke; but she dared not speak of it. Her refined good sense, and her delicacy of feeling, took offence at the thought of revealing a dream of which the cause and object were her own pecuniary interests; she naturally attributed it to La Bougival's chat, as she was going to sleep, of the doctor's liberality, and the convictions her old nurse still cherished on the subject.

But the dream returned with aggravated details, which made her dread it greatly. The second time her godfather laid his ice-cold hand on her shoulder, causing her the acutest pain, an indescribable sensation. "The dead must be obeyed!" he said in sepulchral tones.

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"And tears," she added, "fell from his hollow blank eyes."

The third time the dead man took her by her long plaits of hair, and showed her Minoret talking with Goupil, and promising him money if he would take Ursule to Sens. Then she made up her mind to tell her three dreams to the Abbé Chaperon.

"Monsieur le Curé," she said to him one evening, "do you believe that the dead can walk?"

"My child, sacred history, profane history, modern history bear witness in many passages to their appearing. Still, the Church has never made it an article of faith; and as to science, in France it laughs it to scorn."

"What do you believe?"

"The power of God, my child, in infinite."

"Did my godfather ever speak to you of these things?"

"Yes; often. He had completely changed his views of such matters. His conversion dated from the day, as he told me twenty times, when a woman at Paris heard you, at Nemours, praying for him, and saw the red dot you had made on the calendar at the name of Saint-Savinien."

Ursule gave a scream that made the priest shudder; she remembered the scene when, on his return from Paris, her guardian had read her heart, and had taken away her calendar.

"If that is the case," said she, "my visions are possible. My godfather has appeared to me as Jesus appeared to His disciples. He stands in a golden light, and he speaks to me. I wanted to beg you to say a mass for the repose of his soul, and to beseech the interposition of God to stop these apparitions which overwhelm me."

She then related her three dreams in every detail, insisting on the absolute truthfulness of the facts, the freedom of her own movements, and the clear vision of an inner self which, as she described it, followed the guidance of her uncle's spectre with perfect ease. What most surprised the priest, to whom Ursule's perfect veracity was well known, was her exact description of the room formerly occupied by Zélie Mi-

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noret at the posting-house, into which Ursule had never been, and which, indeed, she had never even heard mentioned.

"By what means can these strange apparitions be produced?" said Ursule. "What did my godfather think?"

"Your godfather, my child, argued from hypotheses. He acknowledged the possible existence of a spiritual world, a world of ideas. If ideas are a creation proper to man, if they subsist and live a life peculiar to themselves, they must have forms imperceptible to our external senses, but perceptible to our interior senses under certain conditions. Thus your godfather's ideas may enwrap you, and you perhaps have lent them his aspect. Then, if Minoret has committed these actions, they are dissolved into ideas; for every action is the outcome of several ideas. Now, if ideas have their being in the spiritual world, your spirit may have been enabled to see them when transported thither. These phenomena are not more strange than those of memory; and those of memory are as surprising and as inexplicable as those of the perfume of plants, which are perhaps the plants' ideas."

"Dear me! how you expand the world! But is it really possible to hear a dead man speak, to see him walk and act?"

"Swedenborg, in Sweden," replied the Abbé, "has proved to demonstration that he held intercourse with the dead. But, at any rate, come into the library, and in the life of the famous Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, and who certainly was not the man to invent a cock-and-bull story, you will read of an adventure almost like your own, which also occurred, above a hundred years before, to Cardan."

Ursule and the curé went up to the first floor, and the good man found for her a little duodecimo edition, printed in Paris in 1666, of the *History of Henri de Montmorency*, written by a contemporary priest who had known that prince.

"Read," said the curé, giving her the volume open at pages 175 and 176. "Your godfather often read this passage; see, here are some grains of his snuff."

"And he is no more!" said Ursule, taking the book to read this passage:—

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"The siege of Privas was remarkable for the loss of some of the persons in command. Two colonels were killed: to wit, the Marquis d'Uxelles, who died of a wound received in the trenches, and the Marquis de Portes, by a gunshot in the head. He was to have been made Marshal of France the very day he was killed. Just about the moment when the Marquis died, the Duc de Montmorency, who was sleeping in his tent, was roused by a voice like that of the Marquis, bidding him farewell. The love he had for one who was so near to him caused him to attribute the illusion of this dream to the power of his imagination; and the toil of the night, which he had spent as usual in the trenches, made him go to sleep again without any fear. But the same voice suddenly broke it again; and the phantom, which he had only seen in his sleep, compelled him to wake once more, and to hear distinctly the same words that it had spoken before disappearing. The Duc then recollected that one day when they had heard Pitrat the philosopher discoursing of the separation of the soul from the body, they had promised to bid each other farewell, whichever died first, if he were permitted. Whereupon, unable to hinder his dread of the truth of this warning, he at once sent one of his servants to the Marquis' lodgings, which were distant from his own. But before his man could return he was sent for by the King, who caused him to be told, by persons who could comfort him, of the misfortune he had already apprehended.

"I leave it to the learned to discuss the cause of this event, which I have often heard the Duc de Montmorency relate, and which I have thought worthy to be set down for its marvelousness and its truth."

"But, then," asked Ursule, "what ought I to do?"

"My child," said the curé, "the case is so serious, and so much to your own advantage, that you must keep complete silence. Now that you have trusted me with the secret of this apparition, perhaps it will come no more. Besides, you are strong enough now to go to church; well, then, to-morrow you can come to thank God, and to pray for the peace of your

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godfather's soul. Be quite sure, at any rate, that your secret is in safe hands."

"If you could know in what terror I go to sleep! What awful looks my godfather gives me! The last time he held on to my dress to see me longer. I woke with my face streaming with tears."

"Rest in peace; he will come no more," said the curé.

Without losing a minute the Abbé Chaperon went to Minoret's house and begged him to grant him a minute's conversation in the Chinese pavilion, insisting that they must be alone.

"No one can hear us?" asked the priest.

"No one," said Minoret.

"Monsieur, my character is known to you," said the worthy priest, looking Minoret mildly but steadfastly in the face. "I must speak to you of some serious, extraordinary matters, which concern you alone, and which you may rely on me to keep a profound secret; but it is impossible that I should not reveal them to you.—When your uncle was alive, there stood just there——" said the Abbé, pointing to the spot, "a little chiffonier of Boule with a marble top" (Minoret turned pale), "and under the marble slab your uncle placed a letter for his ward——"

The curé went on to tell Minoret the whole story of Minoret's conduct, without omitting the smallest detail. The retired postmaster, when he heard of the circumstance of the two matches which went out before burning up, felt his hair creep on his thick-set scalp.

"Who has invented such a cock-and-bull story?" he said in a husky voice, when the tale was finished.

"The dead man himself!"

This reply made Minoret shiver slightly, for he too saw the doctor in his dreams.

"God is most good to work miracles for me, Monsieur le Curé," said Minoret, inspired by his peril to utter the only jest he ever perpetrated in his life.

"All that God does is natural," replied the priest.

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"Your phantasmagoria does not frighten me," said the colossus, recovering his presence of mind a little.

"I have not come to frighten you, my dear sir, for I shall never speak of this to any living creature," said the curé. "You alone know the truth. It is a matter between you and God."

"Come, now, Monsieur le Curé, do you believe me capable of such a breach of faith?"

"I believe in no crimes but those which are confessed to me, and of which the sinner repents," said the priest in apostolic tones.

"A crime?" exclaimed Minoret.

"A crime, terrible in its results."

"In what way?"

"In the fact that it evades human justice. The crimes which are not expiated here will be expiated in the other world. God Himself avenges the innocent."

"You think that God troubles Himself about such trifles?"

"If He could not see all the worlds and every detail at a glance, as you hold a landscape in your eye, He would not be God."

"Monsieur le Curé, do you give me your word of honor that you have heard all this story from no one but my uncle?"

"Your uncle has appeared three times to Ursule, to reiterate it. Worn out by these dreams, she confided these revelations to me, under the seal of secrecy; she herself regards them as so entirely irrational that she will never allude to them. So on that point you may be quite easy."

"But I am quite easy on all points, Monsieur Chaperon."

"I can but hope so," said the old priest. "Even if I should regard such warnings given in dreams as utterly absurd, I should still think it necessary to communicate them to you on account of the singularity of the details. You are a respectable man; and you have earned your fine fortune too legitimately to wish to add to it by robbery. You are, too, a very simple man; remorse would torture you too cruelly. We have in our-

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selves an instinct of justice, in the civilized man as in the savage, which does not allow of our enjoying in peace anything we have acquired dishonestly according to the laws of the society we live in; for well-organized communities are modeled on the plan given to the universe by God Himself. In so far, society has a divine origin. Man does not evolve ideas, does not invent forms; he imitates the eternal relations he finds in all that surrounds him. Consequently, this is what happens: no criminal going to the scaffold with the full power of carrying out of the world the secret of his crimes, allows himself to be executed without making the confession to which he is urged by a mysterious impulse.—So, my dear Monsieur Minoret, if you are easy I may go away happy."

Minoret was so dazed that he left the curé to let himself out. As soon as he was alone he flew into the rage of a full-blooded nature; he broke out in the wildest blasphemies, and called Ursule by every odious name.

"Why, what has she done to you?" asked his wife, who had come in on tiptoe after seeing the curé depart.

For the first and only time in his life, Minoret, drunk with fury and driven to extremities by his wife's persistent questioning, beat her so soundly that when she fell helpless he was obliged to lift her in his arms, and, very much ashamed of himself, to put her to bed.

He himself had a short fit of illness; the doctor was obliged to bleed him twice. When he was about again, every one, within a short time, noticed that he was altered. Minoret would take walks alone, and often wander about the streets like a man uneasy in his mind. He seemed absent-minded when spoken to—he, who had never had two ideas in his head. At last, one day, he addressed the Justice, in the High Street, as he was going, no doubt, to fetch Ursule to take her to Madame de Portenduère's, where the whist parties had begun again.

"Monsieur Bongrand, I have something rather important to say to my cousin Ursule," said he, taking the Justice by

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the arm, "and I am glad that you should be present; you may give her some advice."

They found Ursule at the piano; she rose with an air of cold dignity when she saw Minoret.

"Monsieur Minoret wishes to speak with you on business, my dear," said the Justice. "By the way, do not forget to give me your dividend warrants. I am going to Paris, and I will get your six months' interest, and La Bougival's."

"Cousin," said Minoret, "our uncle had accustomed you to an easier life than you now enjoy."

"It is possible to be very happy without much money," said she.

"I have been thinking that money would help to make you happy," replied Minoret, "and I came to offer you some, out of respect for my uncle's memory."

"You had a very natural course open to your respect for him," said Ursule severely. "You might have left his house just as it was, and have sold it to me, for you ran the price up so high only in the hope of finding treasure hoarded there——"

"At any rate," said Minoret, evidently ill at ease, "if you had twelve thousand francs a year, you would be in a position to marry the better."

"I have not such an income."

"But if I were to give it to you, on condition of your purchasing an estate in Brittany, in Madame de Portenduère's part of the country, she would then consent to your marrying her son?——"

"Monsieur Minoret, I have no right to so large a sum, and could not possibly accept it from you. We are scarcely related, and still less are we friends. I have suffered too much already from slander to wish to give any cause for evil speaking. What have I done to deserve such a gift? On what pretext could you make me such a present? These questions, which I have a right to ask you, every one will answer in his own way. It will be interpreted as compensation for some injury, and I decline to recognize any. Your uncle

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did not bring me up in ignoble sentiments. We can accept gifts only from a friend. I could not feel any affection for you, and should necessarily prove ungrateful, so I do not choose to run the risk of such ingratitude."

"You refuse!" exclaimed the colossus; the idea of anybody's refusing a fortune would never have entered his head.

"I refuse," repeated Ursule.

"But on what grounds have you any claim to offer such a fortune to Mademoiselle?" asked the old lawyer. "You have an idea; have you an idea?"

"Well, yes; the idea of getting her away from Nemours, that my son may leave me in peace; he is in love with her, and insists on marrying her."

"Well, we will see about that," replied the Justice, settling his spectacles. "Give us time to reflect."

He escorted Minoret home, quite approving his anxiety as to the future on Désiré's account, gently blaming Ursule's hasty decisiveness, and promising to make her listen to reason. As soon as Minoret was within doors, Bongrand went to the posting stables, borrowed a horse and gig, and hurried off to Fontainebleau, where he inquired for Désiré, and was informed that he was at an evening party at the sous-préfet's. The Justice, quite delighted, went on thither. Désiré was playing a rubber with the public prosecutor's wife, the wife of the sous-préfet, and the general of the regiment stationed there.

"I have come the bearer of good news," said Monsieur Bongrand to Désiré. "You are in love with Ursule Mirouët, and your father no longer objects to the marriage."

"Ursule Mirouët! I am in love with her?" cried Désiré, laughing. "What put Ursule Mirouët into your head? I remember seeing her occasionally at old Doctor Minoret's, my great-granduncle, a little girl who is certainly lovely; but she is outrageously pious; and if I, like everybody else, did justice to her charms, I never troubled my head with caring for her washed-out complexion," and he smiled at the lady of the house—a "sprightly brunette," to use a last cen-

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tury phrase. "Where were you dug up, my dear Monsieur Bongrand? All the world knows that my father is sovereign lord over lands worth forty-eight thousand francs a year, lying round his Château du Rouvre, so all the world knows that I have forty-eight thousand perpetual and funded reasons for not caring for the ward of the law. If I were to marry a mere nobody, these ladies would think me a great fool."

"You have never teased your father about Ursule?"

"Never."

"You hear him, monsieur," said the Justice to the lawyer, who had been listening, and whom he now buttonholed in a corner, where they stood talking for about a quarter of an hour.

An hour later the Justice, having returned to Nemours and to Ursule's house, sent La Bougival to fetch Minoret, who came at once.

"Mademoiselle——" said Bongrand, as Minoret came in.

"Accepts?" Minoret put in, interrupting him.

"No, not yet," replied the Justice, settling his spectacles. "She had some scruples regarding your son's condition, for she had been very much ill used on the score of a similar passion, and knows the value of peace and quiet. Can you swear to her that your son is crazed with love, and that you have no object in view but that of preserving our dear Ursule from some fresh Goupilleries?"

"Oh yes, I swear it!" said Minoret.

"Stop a minute, Master Minoret!" said the Justice, taking one of his hands out of his trousers-pocket to slap Minoret on the back, making him start. "Do not so lightly commit perjury."

"Perjury!"

"It lies between you and your son, who, at Fontainebleau, at the sous-préfet's house, and in the presence of four persons and the public prosecutor of the district, has just sworn that he never once thought of his cousin Ursule Mirouët. You must therefore have had other reasons for offering her such

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an immense sum? I perceived that you were making very rash statements, and I have been to Fontainebleau myself."

Minoret stood aghast at his own blunder.

"Still, there is no harm, Monsieur Bongrand, in offering to a young relative what will facilitate a marriage, which, as it would seem, will make her happy, and in seeking some excuse to overcome her modesty."

Minoret, who in his extremity had hit on an almost admissible plea, wiped his brow, wet with large drops of sweat.

"You know my motives for refusing," replied Ursule. "I can but beg you to come here no more. Monsieur de Portenduère has not told me his reasons, but he has a feeling of contempt, even of hatred of you, which forbids me to receive you. My happiness is my whole fortune; I do not blush to own it; and I will do nothing to compromise it, for Monsieur de Portenduère is waiting only till I am of age to marry me."

"The proverb, 'Money is all-powerful,' is very false!" said the huge, burly Minoret, looking at the Justice, whose observant eyes disturbed him greatly.

He rose and went away; but he found the air outside as oppressive as that in the little sitting-room.

"I must somehow put an end to this!" said he to himself as he got home.

"Now, your dividend warrant, my child," said the Justice, a good deal surprised at Ursule's calmness after so strange a scene.

When she returned with her own warrant and La Bougival's, Ursule found the Justice walking up and down the room.

"You have no idea what could have led to that huge lout's offer?" he asked her.

"None that I can tell you," she replied.

Monsieur Bongrand looked at her in surprise.

"Then we both have the same notion," he said. "Here, make a note of the numbers of the two warrants, in case I should lose them; that is always a necessary precaution."

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Bongrand himself noted on a card the numbers of the warrants.

"Good-bye, my child; I shall be away two days, but I shall be back on the third for my sitting."

That night Ursule had a vision of a very strange character. It seemed to her that her bed was in the graveyard of Nemours, and that her uncle's grave was at the foot of the bed. The white stone on which she read the epitaph dazzled her eyes, and opened endways like the front cover of an album. She shrieked loudly, but the figure of the doctor slowly sat up. She saw first his yellow head and white hair, that shone as if surrounded by a halo. Under his bald forehead his eyes glittered like beams of light, and he rose as if drawn up by some superior force. Ursule trembled horribly in her bodily frame; her flesh felt like a burning garment; and, as she subsequently described it, there seemed to be another self moving within it.

"Mercy!" she cried, "godfather!"

"Mercy?—It is too late," he answered in the voice of the dead, to use the poor girl's inexplicable expression when she related this fresh dream to the Abbé Chaperon. "He has been warned. He has paid no heed to the warning. His son's days are numbered. If he does not, ere long, confess all and make full restitution, he will mourn his son, who is to perish by a horrible and violent death. Tell him this!" The spectre pointed to a row of figures, which flashed on the wall as if they had been written with fire, and said: "That is his sentence!"

When her uncle had lain down in the grave again, Ursule heard the noise of the stone falling into place, and then, far away, a strange noise of horses, and men shouting.

Next day Ursule was prostrate. She could not get up, this dream had so overwrought her. She begged her old nurse to go at once to the Abbé Chaperon and bring him back with her. The good man came as soon as he had performed mass; but he was not at all astonished by Ursule's dream. He was

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convinced of the fact of the robbery, and no longer sought any explanation of the abnormal state of his "little dreamer." He left Ursule, and went straight to Minoret.

"Dear me, Monsieur le Curé," said Zélie, "my husband's temper is so spoilt, I don't know what is the matter with him. Until lately, he was a perfect child; but these two months past I hardly know him. That he should have got into such a rage as to strike me—me, when I am so gentle! The man must be completely and utterly altered. You will find him among the rocks; he spends his life there. What does he do there?"

In spite of the heat—it was September 1836—the priest crossed the canal, and turned up a pathway, where he saw Minoret sitting under a boulder.

"You are in some great trouble, Monsieur Minoret," said the priest, appearing before the guilty man. "You belong to me, you know, for you are unhappy. Unfortunately, I have come to add, perhaps, to your apprehensions. Ursule has just had a terrible dream. Your uncle lifted up his gravestone to prophesy misfortune to your family. I have not come to frighten you, believe me, but you ought to be told what he said——"

"Really, Monsieur le Curé, I cannot be left in peace anywhere, not even in this wilderness. I want to know nothing of what goes on in the next world."

"I will leave you, monsieur. I have not taken this walk in the heat for my own pleasure," said the priest, wiping his brow.

"Well, then, what was it the old fellow said?" asked Minoret.

"You are threatened with the loss of your son. If your uncle could tell things which you alone knew, you must tremble at the things which we none of us know. Restitution, my dear sir, restitution! Do not lose your soul for a little gold."

"Restitution of what?"

"Of the fortune the doctor intended for Ursule. You stole

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"You stole the three certificates"

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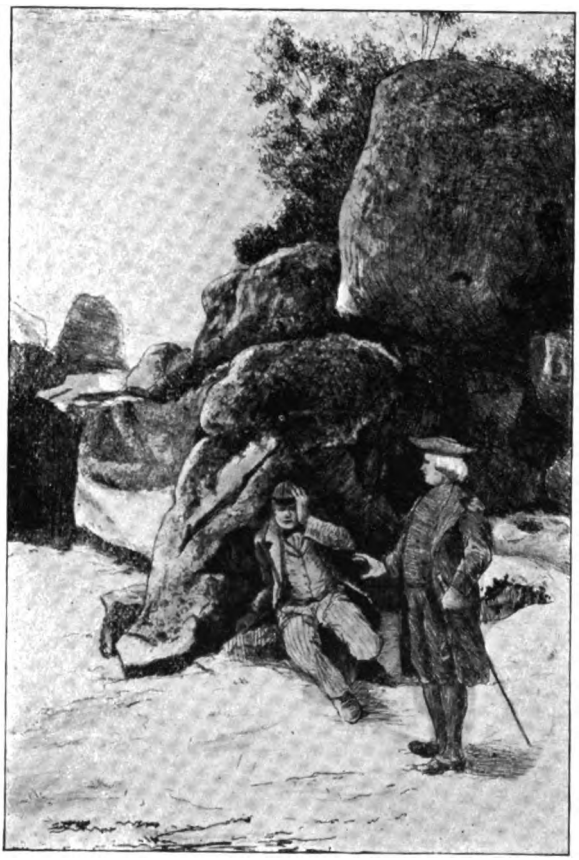

"You stole the three certificates"

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the three certificates; I now know it. You began by persecuting the poor girl, and you now end by offering her a dowry; you have fallen so low as lying; you are entangled in its mazes, and make a false step at every turn. You are yourself clumsy, and you have been badly served by your accomplice Goupil, who only laughs at you. Make haste, for you are being watched by clever and clear-sighted persons, Ursule's friends. Restitution! And even if you do not save your son, who may not be in any danger, you will save your own soul, and your honor. In a society constituted as ours is, in a little town where you all have your eyes on each other, and where what is not known is surely guessed, can you hope to hide an ill-gotten fortune? Come, my son, an innocent man would not have allowed me to say so much."

"Go to the devil!" cried Minoret. "I do not know what you are all at, setting on me. I like these stones better, for they leave me in peace."

"Good-bye. You have been warned by me, my dear sir, without a soul in the world having heard a single word about the matter, either from me or from that poor girl. But beware! There is a man who has his eye on you. God have mercy on you!"

The curé turned and left him. When he had gone a few steps, he looked back once more at Minoret. He was sitting with his head between his hands, for his head ached. Minoret was a little mad.

In the first place, he had kept the three certificates; he did not know what to do with them; he dared not present them himself; he was afraid lest he should be recognized; he did not wish to sell them, and was trying to hit on some way of transferring them. His day dreams were romances of business, of which the climax always was the transfer of those cursed certificates. In this dreadful predicament he thought, however, of confessing to his wife, so as to have some advice. Zélie, who had steered her own ship so well, would know how to get him out of this scrape.

Three per cents were now quoted at eighty, thus, with ar-

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rears, the restitution in question would amount to nearly a million francs. Give up a million, without any proof against him that he had taken them!—This was no joke. And during the whole of September and part of October Minoret remained a prey to remorse and irresolution. To the amazement of the whole town, he grew thinner.

A fearful circumstance hastened the imparting of his secret to Zélie; the sword of Damocles swayed over their heads. Towards the middle of October Monsieur and Madame Minoret received the following letter from their son Désiré:—

"My dear Mother,—If I have not been to see you since the vacation, it is because, in the first place, I have been on duty in the absence of my chief, and also because I knew that Monsieur de Portenduère only awaited my going to Nemours to pick a quarrel with me. Tired, perhaps, of the long postponement of the revenge he is anxious to take on our family, the Vicomte has been to Fontainebleau, where he appointed to meet one of his friends from Paris, after making sure of the assistance of the Vicomte de Soulanges, brigadier of the hussars quartered here.

"He called on me very politely, accompanied by these two gentlemen, and told me that my father was undoubtedly the originator of the infamous persecution directed against Ursule Mirouët, his future wife; he gave me proof by telling me that Goupil had confessed before witnesses, and by giving me an account of my father's conduct; he, it seems, after refusing at first to carry out his promises to Goupil as the price of his villainous devices, found the necessary funds for acquiring the place of summonsing officer at Nemours, and finally, out of fear, stood surety to Monsieur Dionis for the purchase of his practice, and so disposed of Goupil. The Vicomte, who cannot fight a man of sixty-seven, and who insists on avenging the insults heaped on Ursule, formally asked satisfaction of me. His purpose, thought out and determined on in silence, was not to be altered. If I should refuse to fight, he meant to meet me in a drawing-room in the

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presence of those persons whose opinion I most value, and there to insult me so grossly that either I must fight or my hopes in life be at an end. In France a coward is universally contemned. Moreover, his motives for demanding such reparation would be laid before me by gentlemen of honor.

"He was sorry, he said, to be driven to such extremities. In the opinion of his seconds, the wisest thing I could do would be to arrange a meeting, as men of honor are in the habit of doing, in such a way that Ursule's name should not appear in the matter. Finally, to avoid all scandal in France, we could, with our seconds, cross the frontier at the nearest point. Thus everything would be arranged for the best. His name, he said, was worth ten times my fortune, and his prospects of happiness were a greater stake for him to risk than anything I could risk in this duel, which is to be fatal. He desired me to choose seconds and settle the matter. My seconds met his yesterday, and they unanimously decided that I owe him this reparation.

"In a week I set out for Geneva with two of my friends. Monsieur de Portenduère, Monsieur de Soulanges, and Monsieur de Trailles will go there their own way. We fight with pistols; all the details are arranged. Each is to fire three shots, and then, whatever may have come of it, the matter is at an end. To avoid all talk of such a dirty business—for I cannot possibly justify my father's conduct—I am writing to you only at the last minute. I will not go to see you on account of the violence you might display, which would be quite out of place. To make my way in the world I must obey its laws; and where a Vicomte finds ten reasons for a duel, the son of a postmaster must have a hundred. I shall pass through Nemours at night, and will there bid you good-bye."

When they had read this letter, there was a scene between Zélie and Minoret, which ended in his confessing the theft, with all the circumstances connected with it, and the strange scenes to which it had everywhere given rise, even in the

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realm of dreams. The million had the same fascination for Zélie as it had for Minoret.

"Do you stay quietly here," said Zélie, without the smallest reproach to her husband for his blundering; "I will take the matter in hand. We will keep the money, and Désiré shall not fight."

Madame Minoret put on her shawl and bonnet and hurried off to Ursule with her son's letter; she found her alone, for it was about twelve o'clock.

In spite of her audacity, Zélie Minoret was abashed by the girl's cold looks, but she scolded herself for her cowardice, and took an airy tone.

"Here, Mademoiselle Mirouët, have the kindness to read this letter, and tell me what you think of it," she exclaimed, holding out her son's letter.

Ursule felt a thousand conflicting emotions on reading this letter, which proved to her how deeply she was loved, and what care Savinien would take of the honor of the woman he was about to marry; but she was at once too pious and too charitable to desire to be the cause of death or suffering to her worst enemy.

"I promise you, madame, that I will hinder this duel, and your mind may be easy; but I beg you to leave me the letter."

"Let us see, my beauty, if we cannot do better than that. Listen to me. We have estates to the tune of forty-eight thousand a year round le Rouvre, which is a real royal château; besides that we can give Désiré twenty-four thousand francs a year in consols; seventy-two thousand francs a year in all. You will allow that there are not many matches to compare with him. You are an ambitious little puss—and you are very right," added Zélie, noting Ursule's eager gesture of denial. "I have come to ask your hand for Désiré; you will take your godfather's name—that will do it honor. Désiré, as you may have seen, is a good-looking young fellow; he is very much liked at Fontainebleau, and will soon be public prosecutor. You, who are such a coaxing charmer, will get him to Paris. At Paris we will give you a fine house; you will

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shine and play a part in society; for with seventy-two thousand francs a year and the salary of a good appointment, you and Désiré will be in the highest circles. Consult your friends; you will see what they say."

"I need only consult my heart, madame."

"Pooh, pooh! Now you will be talking of that little lady-killer Savinien? Hang it all! you will pay very dear for his name, his little moustache twirled into two curly spikes, and his black hair. A pretty boy he is! A nice business you will make of housekeeping on seven thousand francs a year, and a husband who ran into debt for a hundred thousand in two years in Paris. You don't know it yet, my child, but all men are alike; and though I say it that shouldn't, my Désiré is every bit as good as a king's son."

"You are forgetting, madame, the danger that your son is in at this moment, which can only be averted by Monsieur de Portenduère's wish to oblige me. The danger would be quite inevitable if he should learn that you are making such a dishonoring proposal. I may assure you, madame, that I shall be happier with the small income to which you allude than with the wealth you describe to dazzle me. For reasons unknown as yet—for everything will be known, madame—Monsieur Minoret, by his odious persecution, has brought to light the affection which binds me to Monsieur de Portenduère, and which I may openly avow since his mother will give us her blessing; I may tell you that this affection, now sanctioned and legitimate, is all I live for. No lot, however splendid, however elevated, would induce me to change. I love beyond all possibility of repentance or change. Hence it would be a crime, undoubtedly punished, if I were to marry a man to whom I could only bring a heart that is wholly Savinien's. And, indeed, madame, since you drive me to it, I will say more: even if I did not love Monsieur de Portenduère, I could never make up my mind to go through the sorrows and joys of life as your son's companion. If Monsieur Savinien has been in debt, you have often paid Monsieur Désiré's. Our natures have neither the points of resem-

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blance nor of difference which would allow of our living together without covert bitterness. I, perhaps, should not show him the tolerance that a woman owes to her husband; I should therefore soon become a burden to him. Think no more of a marriage of which I am unworthy, and which I may decline without causing you the smallest regret, since, with such advantages, you will not fail to find plenty of girls handsomer than I am, of higher rank, and much richer."

"Swear to me, child," said Zélie, "that you will prevent these two young men from taking their journey and fighting."

"It will, I know, be the greatest sacrifice Monsieur de Portenduère can make for my sake. But my bridal wreath must not be claimed by blood-stained hands."

"Very well, little cousin; I am much obliged to you, and I hope you may be happy."

"And I, madame, hope you may realize the promise of your son's future."

This reply struck to the mother's heart; she remembered the predictions of Ursule's last dream; she stood up, her little eyes fixed on Ursule's face—so pale, pure, and fair in her half-mourning dress—for Ursule had risen, as a hint to her self-called cousin to leave.

"Then you believe in dreams?" asked Zélie.

"I suffer from them too much not to believe in them."

"But then——" Zélie began.

"Good-morning, madame," said Ursule, with a bow to Madame Minoret, as she heard the curé's step.

The Abbé Chaperon was surprised to find Madame Minoret with Ursule. The anxiety depicted on the retired postmistress' pinched and wrinkled face naturally led the priest to study the two women by turns.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" Zélie asked the curé.

"Do you believe in dividends?" replied the curé, smiling.

"Sharpers—all of them!" thought Zélie; "they want to get round us. The old priest, the old Justice, and that rascally little Savinien have arranged it all. There are no more dreams in it than there are hairs in the palm of my hand." She courtesied twice with curt abruptness, and went away.

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"I know why Savinien went to Fontainebleau," said Ursule to the Abbé Chaperon, and she informed him of the duel, begging him to use his influence to prevent it.

"And Madame Minoret proposed to you to marry her son?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

"Minoret has probably confessed his crime to his wife," added the curé.

The Justice, who came in at this moment, heard of the proceedings and the offer made by Zélie, whose hatred of Ursule was known to him, and he glanced at the curé as much as to say—"Come out; I want to speak to you about Ursule out of her hearing."

"Savinien will hear that you have refused eighty thousand francs a year and the cock of the walk of Nemours!" he said.

"Is that any sacrifice?" answered she. "Is anything a sacrifice to those who truly love? And is there any merit in my refusing the son of a man we despise? If others can make a virtue of their aversions, that should not be the moral code of a girl brought up by a Jordy, an Abbé Chaperon, and our dear doctor!" and she looked up at the portrait.

Bongrand took Ursule's hand and kissed it.

"Do you know," said the Justice to the curé when they were in the street, "what Madame Minoret came for?"

"What?" said the priest, looking at his friend with a keen eye that only revealed curiosity.

"She wanted to make a kind of restitution."

"Then, do you think——?" began the Abbé Chaperon.

"I do not think, I am sure—here, only look." The Justice pointed to Minoret, who was coming towards them on his way home, for on leaving Ursule's house the two friends had turned up the High Street.

"Having to plead in court, I have naturally studied many cases of remorse, but I never saw one to compare with this. What can have produced that flaccid pallor in cheeks of which the skin was as tight as a drum, bursting with the coarse, rude health of a man without a care? What has set dark rings

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round those eyes, and deadened their rustic twinkle? Could you have believed that there would ever be a wrinkle on that brow, or that that colossus could ever have felt his brain reel? At last he is conscious of a heart! I know the phases of remorse, my dear curé, as you know those of repentance. Those that have hitherto come under my observation were awaiting punishment, or condemned to endure it, to settle their score with the world; they were resigned, or breathed vengeance. But here we have remorse without expiation; remorse pure and simple, greedy of its prey, and rending it.—You are not yet aware," said the Justice, stopping Minoret, "that Mademoiselle Mirouët has just refused your son's hand?"

"But," added the curé, "you may be easy; she will prevent his duel with Monsieur de Portenduère."

"Ah! my wife has been successful," said Minoret; "I am very glad. I was more dead than alive."

"You are indeed so altered that you are not like yourself," said the Justice.

Minoret looked from one to the other to see if the curé had betrayed him, but the Abbé preserved a fixity of countenance, a calm melancholy, that reassured the guilty man.

"And the change is all the more surprising," the lawyer went on, "because you ought to be perfectly happy. Why, here you are, lord of le Rouvre, to which you have added les Bordières, all your farms, your mills, your meadows. You have a hundred thousand francs a year in consols——"

"I hold no consols," said Minoret, hastily.

"Bah!" said the Justice. "Why, it is just the same with that as with your son's love for Ursule. One day he will have nothing to say to her, and the next asks her to marry him. After having tried to kill Ursule with misery, you want to have her for a daughter-in-law! My dear sir, there is something at the bottom of all this!"

Minoret wanted to answer; he tried to find words, he could only bring out:

"You are funny, Monsieur le Juge de Paix.—Good-day, gentlemen."

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And he slowly turned down the Rue des Bourgeois.

"He has stolen our poor Ursule's fortune. But how can we prove it?"

"God grant——" said the curé.

"God has endowed us with a feeling which is now speaking in that man," replied the Justice. "But we call that presumptive evidence, and human justice requires something more."

The Abbé Chaperon kept silence, as a priest. As happens in such cases, he thought much more often than he wished of the robbery Minoret had almost confessed, and of Savinien's happiness, so evidently delayed by Ursule's lack of fortune; for the old lady owned in secret to her spiritual director how wrong she had been not to consent to her son's marriage during the doctor's lifetime.

Next day, as he came down the altar steps after Mass, he was struck by an idea, which came upon him with the force of a voice calling to him. He signed to Ursule to wait for him, and went home with her without breakfasting.

"My dear child," said he, "I want to see the two volumes in which your godfather, as you dream of him, says that he placed the certificates and notes."

Ursule and the curé went upstairs to the library and took down the third volume of the *Pandects*. On opening it, the curé observed, not without surprise, the mark left by some papers on the pages, which, offering less resistance than the boards of the binding, still showed the impression made by the certificates; and in the other volume it was easy to see the readiness to open caused by the long pressure of a packet of papers between two pages of the folio.

"Come in, come up!" cried the Abbé to the Justice, who was just passing the house.

Bongrand entered the room at the very moment when the priest was putting on his spectacles to read three numbers written by the dead doctor's hand on the colored vellum-paper guard placed inside the boards by the binder, and which Ursule had just detected.

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"What is the meaning of that? Our worthy friend was too great a book-lover to spoil the guard of a binding," said the Abbé Chaperon; "here are three numbers written between a first number, preceded by an M, and another preceded by an U."

"What do you say?" cried Bongrand. "Let me look at that. —Good God!" he exclaimed, "is not this enough to open the eyes of an atheist, by proving to him the existence of Providence? Human justice is, I believe, the development of a divine idea brooding over the universe."

He seized Ursule and kissed her on the forehead.

"Oh! my child, you shall be happy—rich—and through me!"

"What is it?" said the curé.

"My dear monsieur!" cried La Bougival, taking the tail of the Justice's blue coat, "let me embrace you for what you say."

"But explain yourself," said the curé, "that we may not rejoice vainly."

"If, in order to be rich, I must give anybody pain," said Ursule, who had an inkling of a criminal trial, "I——"

"But think," said the lawyer, interrupting Ursule, "of the happiness you will give our dear Savinien."

"But you are mad!" said the curé.

"No, my dear curé," said Bongrand. "Listen Certificates of consols are numbered in as many series as there are letters of the alphabet, and each number bears the letter of its series; but certificates to bearer cannot have any letter, since they are inscribed in no name. Hence, what you here see proves that, on the day when the good man placed his money in state securities, he made a note of the number of his certificate for fifteen thousand francs a year under the letter M—for Minoret; of the numbers of three certificates to bearer; and of that of Ursule Mirouët under the letter U, number 23,534, which, as you see, immediately follows that of the certificate for fifteen thousand francs. This coincidence proves that these numbers are those of five certificates acquired on the same day, and noted by the old man in case

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of loss. I had advised him to put Ursule's money into certificates to bearer, and he must have invested his own money, the money he intended for Ursule, and her little property all on the same day. I am now going to Dionis to look at the inventory. If the number of the certificate he left in his own name is 23,533, letter M, we may be certain that he invested through the same stockbroker, and on the same day: Firstly, his own money in one lump sum; secondly, his savings in three sums, in certificates to bearer; and thirdly, his ward's money; the register of transfer will afford irrefutable proof. Ah, Minoret the wisehead, I have got you! Mum's the word, my friends!"

The Justice left the curé, Ursule, and La Bougival lost in admiration of the ways by which God brings innocence to happy issues.

"The finger of God is here!" cried the Abbé Chaperon.

"Will they do him any hurt?" asked Ursule.

"Oh, mademoiselle," cried La Bougival, "I would give the rope to hang him with!".

The Justice was by this time at the house where Goupil was already the successor designate of Dionis, and went into the office with a careless air.

"I want a little information," said he to Goupil, "as to the estate of Doctor Minoret."

"What is it?" asked Goupil.

"Did the old man leave one or more certificates of investment in three per cents?"

"He left fifteen thousand francs of income in three per cents," said Goupil, "in one certificate. I entered it myself."

"Then just look in the inventory," said the Justice.

Goupil took down a box, turned over the contents, took out the document in question, looked through it, and read, "Item, one certificate—there, read for yourself—number 23,533, letter M."

"Be so kind as to hand over to me an extract of the particulars from the inventory before one o'clock. I will wait for it."

"What can you want it for?" asked Goupil.

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"Do you wish to become notary?" retorted the Justice, looking sternly at the expectant successor to Dionis.

"I should think so!" cried Goupil. "I am sure I have eaten dirt enough to earn my title of *Maître*. I beg you to understand, monsieur, that the wretched office clerk known as Goupil has no connection with *Maître* Jean-Sebastien-Marie Goupil, notary at Nemours, and husband to Mademoiselle Massin. The two men do not know each other; they are not even alike in any particular. Do you not see me?".

Monsieur Bongrand then remarked Goupil's dress. He wore a white stock, a shirt of dazzling whiteness with ruby studs, a red velvet waistcoat, a coat and trousers of fine black cloth and Paris make. He had neat boots, and his hair, carefully combed and smoothed, was elegantly scented. In short, he seemed to have been metamorphosed!

"You are, in fact, another man," said Bongrand.

"Morally as well as physically, monsieur. Wisdom comes with work; and money is the fountain of cleansing——"

"Morally as well as physically?" said the Justice, settling his spectacles.

"Dear me, monsieur, is a man with a hundred thousand crowns a year ever a democrat? Regard me as a respectable man, who has a taste for refinement, and for loving his wife," he added, as Madame Goupil came in. "I am so much altered," said he, "that I think my cousin Madame Crémière quite witty. I have taken her in hand; and even her daughter no longer talks about pistons. Why, only yesterday, in speaking of Monsieur Savinien's dog, she said he was making a point. Well, I did not repeat her blunder, though it is a funny one. I at once explained to her the difference between pointing, making a point, and standing at point. So, you see, I am quite another man, and would not allow a client to get into a mess."

"Well, make haste then," said Bongrand. "Give me that copy within an hour, and Goupil, the notary, will have done something towards repairing the misdeeds of the clerk."

After borrowing from the town doctor his cab and horse,

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the Justice went to fetch the two accusing folios, Ursule's certificate, and the extract from the inventory; armed with these, he drove to Fontainebleau to the public prosecutor there. Bongrand easily proved the abstraction of the three certificates to be the act of one or another of the heirs-at-law, and then demonstrated Minoret's guilt.

"It accounts for his conduct," said the lawyer.

Then, as a measure of precaution, he stopped the transfer of the three certificates by a minute to the treasury, he desired Bongrand to ask what was the amount of interest due on the three certificates, and ascertain if they had been sold.

While the Justice went to do all this at Paris, the public prosecutor wrote a polite note to Madame Minoret to beg her to come to the assize town. Zélie, anxious about her son's duel, dressed, had her own carriage out, and drove post-haste to Fontainebleau. The public prosecutor's scheme was simple but formidable. By separating the husband and wife, he felt sure of learning the truth as a result of the terrors of the law. Zélie found the magistrate in his private room, and was absolutely thunderstruck by this unceremonious speech:

"Madame, I do not imagine that you are an accomplice in a robbery made at the time of Doctor Minoret's death; justice is now on the traces, and you will save your husband from appearing at the bar by making a full confession of all you know about it. The punishment that threatens your husband is not, indeed, all you have to fear; you must try to save your son from degradation, and not cut his throat. In a few minutes it will be too late; the gendarmes are already on horseback, and the warrant for Minoret's apprehension will be sent to Nemours."

Zélie fainted. When she came to herself, she confessed everything. After proving easily to this woman that she was an accomplice, the magistrate told her that, to avoid ruining her husband and son, he would proceed cautiously.

"You have had to deal with a man and not with a judge," said he. "There is no charge on the part of the victim, nor has the theft been made public; but your husband has com-

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mitted dreadful crimes, madame, which are usually tried before a tribunal less accommodating than I am. In the present circumstances of the case you will be obliged to remain prisoner.—Oh, in my house, and on parole," he added, seeing Zélie ready to faint again. "Remember that my strict duty would be to demand a warrant for your imprisonment, and institute an inquiry; however, I am acting at present as the legal guardian of Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët, and in her interests, wisely understood, a compromise will be advisable."

"Ah!" said Zélie.

"Write as follows to your husband." And he dictated this letter to Zélie, who wrote it at his desk, with preposterously bad spelling.

"My Dear,—I am arrested, and I have told all. Give up the certificates left by our uncle to Monsieur de Portenduère by virtue of the will you burned, for monsieur the public prosecutor has stopped them at the Treasury."

"By this means you will prevent his making denials, which would be his ruin," said the lawyer, smiling at the spelling. "We will see about having the restitution carried out in a proper manner. My wife will make your stay at my house as little unpleasant as possible; I advise you to say nothing to any one, and not to show your distress."

As soon as his deputy's mother had confessed, and been placed in safety, the magistrate sent for Désiré, told him point by point the story of the robbery committed by his father, secretly to Ursule's detriment, evidently to that of the co-heirs, and showed him the letter his mother had written. Désiré immediately begged to be sent to Nemours, to see that his father made restitution.

"The whole case is very serious," said his chief. "The will having been destroyed, if the thing becomes known, the co-heirs, Massin and Crémière, your relations, may intervene. I have now sufficient evidence against your father. I give your mother back to you; this little ceremony has sufficiently enlightened her as to her duty. In her eyes I shall seem to have yielded to your entreaties in releasing her. Go to Ne

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mours with her, and guide all these difficulties to a happy issue. Fear nobody. Monsieur Bongrand loves Mademoiselle Mirouët too well to commit any indiscretion."

Zélie and Désiré set out at once for Nemours. Three hours after his deputy's departure, the public prosecutor received by express messenger the following letter, of which the spelling is corrected, not to make an unhappy man ridiculous:

"To the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Assize at Fontainebleau.

"MONSIEUR,—

"God has not been so merciful to us as you have been, and an irreparable misfortune has fallen on us. On arriving at the bridge of Nemours, a strap came unfastened. My wife was at the back of the chaise without a servant; the horses smelt the stable. My son, afraid of their restiveness, would not let the coachman get down, and got out himself to buckle it up. At the moment when he turned to get up again by his mother, the horses started off; Désiré did not make way quickly enough by squeezing back against the parapet, the iron steps cut his legs; he fell, and the hind wheel went over his body. The messenger riding express to Paris to fetch the first surgeons will carry you this letter, which my son, in the midst of his suffering, desires me to write, to express to you our entire submission to your decisions in the business which was bringing him home.

"I shall be grateful to you till my latest breath, for the way in which you have proceeded, and will justify your confidence.

"FRANÇOIS MINORET."

This terrible event upset the whole town of Nemours. The excited crowd that gathered round Minoret's gate showed Savinien that his revenge had been taken in hand by One more powerful than he. The young man went at once to Ursule, and the young girl and the curé alike felt more horror than surprise. The next day, after the first treatment, when the Paris doctors and surgeons had given their advice, which was unanimous as to the necessity for amputating both legs,

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Minoret, pale, dejected, and heartbroken, came, accompanied by the curé, to Ursule's house, where he found Bongrand and Savinien.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "I am guilty towards you; but though all the ill I have done cannot be entirely repaired, some I can expiate. My wife and I have made up our minds to give you, as an absolute possession, our estate of le Rouvre if we preserve our son—as well as if we have the terrible grief of losing him." As he ceased speaking, the man melted into tears.

"I may assure you, my dear Ursule," said the curé, "that you may and ought to accept a part of this gift."

"Do you forgive us?" said the colossus humbly, and kneeling at the feet of the astonished girl. "In a few hours the operation is to be performed by the first surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; but I put no trust in human science; I believe in the omnipotence of God! If you forgive me, if you will go and ask God to preserve us our son, he will have strength to endure this torment, and we shall have the happiness of keeping him, I am sure of it."

"Let us all go to the church!" said Ursule, rising. She no sooner was on her feet than she gave a piercing shriek, fell back in her chair, and fainted away. When she recovered her senses, she saw her friends, with the exception of Minoret, who had rushed off to find a doctor, all with their eyes fixed on her, anxiously expecting her to speak a word. That word filled every heart with horror.

"I saw my godfather at the door," she said. "He signed to me that there was no hope."

And, in fact, the day after the operation, Désiré died, carried off by fever and the revulsion of the humors which follows on such operations. Madame Minoret, whose heart held no sentiment but that of motherhood, went mad after her son's funeral, and was taken by her husband to the care of Doctor Blanche, where she died in January 1841.

Three months after these events, in January 1837, Ursule married Savinien, with Madame de Portenduère's consent. Minoret intervened at the signing of the contract to settle

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on Mademoiselle Mirouët, by deed of gift, his estate of le Rouvre, and twenty-eight thousand francs a year in consols, reserving of all his fortune only his uncle's house and six thousand francs a year. He is become the most charitable and pious man in Nemours, churchwarden of the parish, and the providence of the unfortunate.

"The poor have taken the place of my child," he says.

If you have ever observed by the roadside, in districts where the oak is lopped low, some old tree, bleached, and, as it would seem, blasted, but still throwing out shoots, its sides riven, crying out for the axe, you will have an idea of the old postmaster, white-haired, bent, and lean, in whom the old folks of the district can trace nothing of the happy lout whom we saw watching for his son at the beginning of this tale; he no longer takes snuff in the same way even; he bears some burden besides his body. In short, it is perceptible in everything that the hand of God has been heavily laid on that form to make it a terrible example. After hating his uncle's ward so bitterly, this old man, like Doctor Minoret himself, has so set his affections on Ursule that he is the self-constituted steward of her property at Nemours.

Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère spend five months of the year in Paris, where they have purchased a splendid house in the Faubourg St.-Germain. After bestowing her house at Nemours on the Sisters of Charity to be used as a free school, Madame de Portenduère the elder went to live at le Rouvre, where La Bougival is the head gatekeeper. Cabirolle's father, formerly the guard of the "Ducler," a man of sixty, has married La Bougival, who owns twelve hundred francs a year in consols, besides the comfortable profits of her place. Cabirolle's son is Monsieur de Portenduère's coachman.

When, in the Champs-Élysées, you see one of those neat little low carriages, known as *escargots* (or snail-shells), drive past, and admire a pretty fair woman leaning lightly against a young man, her face surrounded by a myriad of curls, like light foliage, and eyes like luminous periwinkle flowers, full of love—if you should feel the sting of envious

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wishes, remember that this handsome couple, the favorites of God, have paid in advance their tribute to the woes of life. These married lovers will probably be the Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife. There are not two such couples in Paris.

"It is the prettiest happiness I ever saw," said the Comtesse d'Estorade, not long since.

So give those happy children your blessing instead of envying them, and try to find an Ursule Mirouët—a young girl brought up by three old men, and that best of mothers—Adversity.

Goupil, who is helpful to everybody, and justly regarded as the wittiest man in Nemours, is esteemed by the little town; but he is punished in his children, who are hideous, rickety, and hydrocephalous. His predecessor, Dionis, flourishes in the Chamber of Deputies, of which he is one of the greatest ornaments, to the great satisfaction of the King of the French, who sees Madame Dionis at every State ball. Madame Dionis relates to all the town of Nemours the particulars of her reception at the Tuileries, and the grandeurs of the King's Court. She is Queen at Nemours, by virtue of a King who is certainly popular in that sense.

Bongrand is President of the Court of Justice at Melun, his son on the high road to becoming a very respectable public prosecutor.

Madame Crémière still says the funniest things in the world. She writes tambour *tambourg,* and says it is because her pen splutters. On the eve of her daughter's marriage, she told her, in concluding her advice to her, that a wife ought to be the toiling caterpillar of her home, and keep a sphinx's eye on everything. Indeed, Goupil is making a collection of his cousin's absurd blunders, a *Crémièriana.*

"We have had the grief of losing our good Abbé Chaperon this winter," says the Vicomtesse de Portenduère, who nursed him during his illness. All the district attended his funeral. Nemours is fortunate, for this saintly man's successor is the venerable Curé de Saint-Lange.

PARIS, *June-July* 1841.

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MASSIMILLA DONI

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MASSIMILLA DONI

To Jacques Strunz.

MY DEAR STRUNZ:—I should be ungrateful if I did not set your name at the head of one of the two tales I could never have written but for your patient kindness and care. Accept this as my grateful acknowledgment of the readiness with which you tried—perhaps not very successfully—to initiate me into the mysteries of musical knowledge. You have at least taught me what difficulties and what labor genius must bury in those poems which procure us transcendental pleasures. You have also afforded me the satisfaction of laughing more than once at the expense of a self-styled connoisseur.

Some have taxed me with ignorance, not knowing that I have taken counsel of one of our best musical critics, and had the benefit of your conscientious help. I have, perhaps, been an inaccurate amanuensis. If this were the case, I should be the traitorous translator without knowing it, and I yet hope to sign myself always one of your friends.

DE BALZAC.

AS ALL who are learned in such matters know, the Venetian aristocracy is the first in Europe. Its *Libro d'Oro* dates from before the Crusades, from a time when Venice, a survivor of Imperial and Christian Rome which had flung itself into the waters to escape the Barbarians, was already powerful and illustrious, and the head of the political and commercial world.

With a few rare exceptions this brilliant nobility has fallen into utter ruin. Among the gondoliers who serve the English—to whom history here reads the lesson of their future

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fate—there are descendants of long dead Doges whose names are older than those of sovereigns. On some bridge, as you glide past it, if you are ever in Venice, you may admire some lovely girl in rags, a poor child belonging, perhaps, to one of the most famous patrician families. When a nation of kings has fallen so low, naturally some curious characters will be met with. It is not surprising that sparks should flash out among the ashes.

These reflections, intended to justify the singularity of the persons who figure in this narrative, shall not be indulged in any longer, for there is nothing more intolerable than the stale reminiscences of those who insist on talking about Venice after so many great poets and petty travelers. The interest of the tale requires only this record of the most startling contrast in the life of man: the dignity and poverty which are as conspicuous there in some of the men as they are in most of the houses.

The nobles of Venice and of Geneva, like those of Poland in former times, bore no titles. To be named Quirini, Doria, Brignole, Morosini, Sauli, Mocenigo, Fieschi, Cornaro, or Spinola, was enough for the pride of the haughtiest. But all things become corrupt. At the present day some of these families have titles.

And even at a time when the nobles of the aristocratic republics were all equal, the title of Prince was, in fact, given at Genoa to a member of the Doria family, who were sovereigns of the principality of Amalfi, and a similar title was in use at Venice, justified by ancient inheritance from Facino Cane, Prince of Varese. The Grimaldi, who assumed sovereignty, did not take possession of Monaco till much later.

The last Cane of the elder branch vanished from Venice thirty years before the fall of the Republic, condemned for various crimes more or less criminal. The branch on whom this nominal principality then devolved, the Cane Memmi, sank into poverty during the fatal period between 1796 and 1814. In the twentieth year of the present century they were

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represented only by a young man whose name was Emilio, and an old palace which is regarded as one of the chief ornaments of the Grand Canal. This son of Venice the Fair had for his whole fortune this useless Palazzo, and fifteen hundred francs a year derived from a country house on the Brenta, the last plot of the lands his family had formerly owned on *terra firma,* and sold to the Austrian government. This little income spared our handsome Emilio the ignominy of accepting, as many nobles did, the indemnity of a franc a day, due to every impoverished patrician under the stipulations of the cession to Austria.

At the beginning of winter, this young gentleman was still lingering in a country house situated at the base of the Tyrolese Alps, and purchased in the previous spring by the Duchess Cataneo. The house, erected by Palladio for the Piepolo family, is a square building of the finest style of architecture. There is a stately staircase with a marble portico on each side; the vestibules are crowded with frescoes, and made light by sky-blue ceilings across which graceful figures float amid ornament rich in design, but so well proportioned that the building carries it, as a woman carries her head-dress, with an ease that charms the eye; in short, the grace and dignity that characterize the *Procuratie* in the piazetta at Venice. Stone walls, admirably decorated, keep the rooms at a pleasantly cool temperature. Verandas outside, painted in fresco, screen off the glare. The flooring throughout is the old Venetian inlay of marbles, cut into unfading flowers.

The furniture, like that of all Italian palaces, was rich with handsome silks, judiciously employed, and valuable pictures favorably hung; some by the Genoese priest, known as *il Capucino,* several by Leonardo da Vinci, Carlo Dolci, Tintoretto, and Titian.

The shelving gardens were full of the marvels where money has been turned into rocky grottoes and patterns of shells,—the very madness of craftsmanship,—terraces laid out by the fairies, arbors of sterner aspect, where the cypress on its tall trunk, the triangular pines, and the melancholy olive mingled

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pleasingly with orange trees, bays, and myrtles, and clear pools in which blue or russet fishes swam. Whatever may be said in favor of the natural or English garden, these trees, pruned into parasols, and yews fantastically clipped; this luxury of art so skilfully combined with that of nature in Court dress; those cascades over marble steps where the water spreads so shyly, a filmy scarf swept aside by the wind and immediately renewed; those bronzed metal figures speechlessly inhabiting the silent grove; that lordly palace, an object in the landscape from every side, raising its light outline at the foot of the Alps,—all the living thoughts which animate the stone, the bronze, and the trees, or express themselves in garden plots,—this lavish prodigality was in perfect keeping with the loves of a duchess and a handsome youth, for they are a poem far removed from the coarse ends of brutal nature.

Any one with a soul for fantasy would have looked to see, on one of those noble flights of steps, standing by a vase with medallions in bas-relief, a negro boy swathed about the loins with scarlet stuff, and holding in one hand a parasol over the Duchess' head, and in the other the train of her long skirt, while she listened to Emilio Memmi. And how far grander the Venetian would have looked in such a dress as the Senators wore whom Titian painted.

But alas! in this fairy palace, not unlike that of the Peschieri at Genoa, the Duchess Catanco obeyed the edicts of Victorine and the Paris fashions. She had on a muslin dress and broad straw hat, pretty shot silk shoes, thread lace stockings that a breath of air would have blown away; and over her shoulders a black lace shawl. But the thing which no one could ever understand in Paris, where women are sheathed in their dresses as a dragon-fly is cased in its annular armor, was the perfect freedom with which this lovely daughter of Tuscany wore her French attire; she had Italianized it. A Frenchwoman treats her skirt with the greatest seriousness; an Italian never thinks about it; she does not attempt self-protection by some prim glance, for she knows that she is safe in that of a devoted love, a passion as sacred and serious in her eyes as in those of others.

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At eleven in the forenoon, after a walk, and by the side of a table still strewn with the remains of an elegant breakfast, the Duchess, lounging in an easy-chair, left her lover the master of these muslin draperies, without a frown each time he moved. Emilio, seated at her side, held one of her hands between his, gazing at her with utter absorption. Ask not whether they loved; they loved only too well. They were not reading out of the same book, like Paolo and Francesca; far from it, Emilio dared not say: "Let us read." The gleam of those eyes, those glistening gray irises streaked with threads of gold that started from the centre like rifts of light, giving her gaze a soft, star-like radiance, thrilled him with nervous rapture that was almost a spasm. Sometimes the mere sight of the splendid black hair that crowned the adored head, bound by a simple gold fillet, and falling in satin tresses on each side of a spacious brow, was enough to give him a ringing in his ears, the wild tide of the blood rushing through his veins as if it must burst his heart. By what obscure phenomenon did his soul so overmaster his body that he was no longer conscious of his independent self, but was wholly one with this woman at the least word she spoke in that voice which disturbed the very sources of life in him? If, in utter seclusion, a woman of moderate charms can, by being constantly studied, seem supreme and imposing, perhaps one so magnificently handsome as the Duchess could fascinate to stupidity a youth in whom rapture found some fresh incitement; for she had really absorbed his young soul.

Massimilla, the heiress of the Doni, of Florence, had married the Sicilian Duke Cataneo. Her mother, since dead, had hoped, by promoting this marriage, to leave her rich and happy, according to Florentine custom. She had concluded that her daughter, emerging from a convent to embark in life, would achieve, under the laws of love, that second union of heart with heart which, to an Italian woman, is all in all. But Massimilla Doni had acquired in her convent a real taste for a religious life, and, when she had pledged her troth to Duke Cataneo, she was Christianly content to be his wife

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This was an untenable position. Cataneo, who only looked for a duchess, thought himself ridiculous as a husband; and, when Massimilla complained of his indifference, he calmly bid her look about her for a *cavaliere servente,* even offering his services to introduce to her some youths from whom to choose. The Duchess wept; the Duke made his bow.

Massimilla looked about her at the world that crowded round her; her mother took her to the Pergola, to some ambassadors' drawing-rooms, to the Cascine—wherever handsome young men of fashion were to be met; she saw none to her mind, and determined to travel. Then she lost her mother, inherited her property, assumed mourning, and made her way to Venice. There she saw Emilio, who, as he went past her opera box, exchanged with her a flash of inquiry.

This was all. The Venetian was thunderstruck, while a voice in the Duchess' ear called out: "This is he!"

Anywhere else two persons more prudent and less guileless would have studied and examined each other; but these two ignorances mingled like two masses of homogeneous matter, which, when they meet, form but one. Massimilla was at once and thenceforth Venetian. She bought the palazzo she had rented on the Canareggio; and then, not knowing how to invest her wealth, she had purchased Rivalta, the country-place where she was now staying.

Emilio, being introduced to the Duchess by the Signora Vulpato, waited very respectfully on the lady in her box all through the winter. Never was love more ardent in two souls, or more bashful in its advances. The two children were afraid of each other. Massimilla was no coquette. She had no second string to her bow, no *secondo,* no *terzo,* no *patito.* Satisfied with a smile and word, she admired her Venetian youth, with his pointed face, his long, thin nose, his black eyes, and noble brow; but, in spite of her artless encouragement, he never went to her house till they had spent three months in getting used to each other.

Then summer brought its Eastern sky. The Duchess

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lamented having to go alone to Rivalta. Emilio, at once happy and uneasy at the thought of being alone with her, had accompanied Massimilla to her retreat. And now this pretty pair had been here for six months.

Massimilla, now twenty, had not sacrificed her religious principles to her passion without a struggle. Still they had yielded, though tardily; and at this moment she would have been ready to consummate the love union for which her mother had prepared her, as Emilio sat there holding her beautiful, aristocratic hand,—long, white, and sheeny, ending in fine, rosy nails, as if she had procured from Asia some of the henna with which the Sultan's wives dye their fingertips.

A misfortune, of which she was unconscious, but which was torture to Emilio, kept up a singular barrier between them. Massimilla, young as she was, had the majestic bearing which mythological tradition ascribes to Juno, the only goddess to whom it does not give a lover; for Diana, the chaste Diana, loved! Jupiter alone could hold his own with his divine better-half, on whom many English ladies model themselves.

Emilio set his mistress far too high ever to touch her. A year hence, perhaps, he might not be a victim to this noble error which attacks none but very young or very old men. But as the archer who shoots beyond the mark is as far from it as he whose arrow falls short of it, the Duchess found herself between a husband who knew he was so far from reaching the target, that he had ceased to try for it, and a lover who was carried so much past it on the white wings of an angel, that he could not get back to it. Massimilla could be happy with desire, not imagining its issue; but her lover, distressful in his happiness, would sometimes obtain from his beloved a promise that led her to the edge of what many women call "the gulf," and thus found himself obliged to be satisfied with plucking the flowers at the edge, incapable of daring more than to pull off their petals, and smother his torture in his heart.

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They had wandered out together that morning, repeating such a hymn of love as the birds warbled in the branches. On their return, the youth, whose situation can only be described by comparing him to the cherubs represented by painters as having only a head and wings, had been so impassioned as to venture to hint a doubt as to the Duchess' entire devotion, so as to bring her to the point of saying: "What proof do you need?"

The question had been asked with a royal air, and Memmi had ardently kissed the beautiful and guileless hand. Then he suddenly started up in a rage with himself, and left the Duchess. Massimilla remained in her indolent attitude on the sofa; but she wept, wondering how, young and handsome as she was, she could fail to please Emilio. Memmi, on the other hand, knocked his head against the tree-trunks like a hooded crow.

But at this moment a servant came in pursuit of the young Venetian to deliver a letter brought by express messenger.

Marco Vendramini,—a name also pronounced Vendramin, in the Venetian dialect, which drops many final letters,—his only friend, wrote to tell him that Facino Cane, Prince of Varese, had died in a hospital in Paris. Proofs of his death had come to hand, and the Cane-Memmi were Princes of Varese. In the eyes of the two young men a title without wealth being worthless, Vendramin also informed Emilio, as of a far more important fact, of the engagement at the *Fenice* of the famous tenor Genovese, and the no less famous Signora Tinti.

Without waiting to finish the letter, which he crumpled up and put in his pocket, Emilio ran to communicate this great news to the Duchess, forgetting his heraldic honors.

The Duchess knew nothing of the strange story which made la Tinti an object of curiosity in Italy, and Emilio briefly repeated it.

This illustrious singer had been a mere inn-servant, whose wonderful voice had captivated a great Sicilian nobleman on his travels. The girl's beauty—she was then twelve years old

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—being worthy of her voice, the gentleman had had the moderation to have brought her up, as Louis XV. had Mademoiselle de Romans educated. He had waited patiently till Clara's voice had been fully trained by a famous professor, and till she was sixteen, before taking toll of the treasure so carefully cultivated.

La Tinti had made her début the year before, and had enchanted the three most fastidious capitals of Italy.

"I am perfectly certain that her great nobleman is not my husband," said the Duchess.

The horses were ordered, and the Duchess set out at once for Venice, to be present at the opening of the winter season.

So one fine evening in November, the new Prince of Varese was crossing the lagoon from Mestre to Venice, between the lines of stakes painted with Austrian colors, which mark out the channel for gondolas as conceded by the custom-house. As he watched Massimilla's gondola, navigated by men in livery, and cutting through the water a few yards in front, poor Emilio, with only an old gondolier who had been his father's servant in the days when Venice was still a living city, could not repress the bitter reflections suggested to him by the assumption of his title.

"What a mockery of fortune! A prince—with fifteen hundred francs a year! Master of one of the finest palaces in the world, and unable to sell the statues, stairs, paintings, sculpture, which an Austrian decree had made inalienable! To live on a foundation of piles of campeachy wood worth nearly a million of francs, and have no furniture! To own sumptuous galleries, and live in an attic above the topmost arabesque cornice constructed of marble brought from the Morea—the land which a Memmius had marched over as conqueror in the time of the Romans! To see his ancestors in effigy on their tombs of precious marbles in one of the most splendid churches in Venice, and in a chapel graced with pictures by Titian and Tintoretto, by Palma, Bellini, Paul Veronese—and to be prohibited from selling a marble Memmi to the English for bread for the living Prince Varese! Geno-

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vese, the famous tenor, could get in one season, by his warbling, the capital of an income on which this son of the Memmi could live—this descendant of Roman senators as venerable as Cæsar and Sylla. Genovese may smoke an Eastern hookah, and the Prince of Varese cannot even have enough cigars!"

He tossed the end he was smoking into the sea. The Prince of Varese found cigars at the Duchess Cataneo's; how gladly would he have laid the treasures of the world at her feet! She studied all his caprices, and was happy to gratify them. He made his only meal at her house—his supper; for all his money was spent in clothes and his place in the *Fenice*. He had also to pay a hundred francs a year as wages to his father's old gondolier; and he, to serve him for that sum, had to live exclusively on rice. Also he kept enough to take a cup of black coffee every morning at Florian's to keep himself up till the evening in a state of nervous excitement, and this habit, carried to excess, he hoped would in due time kill him, as Vendramin relied on opium.

"And I am a prince!"

As he spoke the words, Emilio Memmi tossed Marco Vendramin's letter into the lagoon without even reading it to the end, and it floated away like a paper boat launched by a child.

"But Emilio," he went on to himself, "is but three and twenty. He is a better man than Lord Wellington with the gout, than the paralyzed Regent, than the epileptic royal family of Austria, than the King of France——"

But as he thought of the King of France Emilio's brow was knit, his ivory skin burned yellower, tears gathered in his black eyes and hung to his long lashes; he raised a hand worthy to be painted by Titian to push back his thick brown hair, and gazed again at Massimilla's gondola.

"And this insolent mockery of fate is carried even into my love affair," said he to himself. "My heart and imagination are full of precious gifts; Massimilla will none of them; she is a Florentine, and she will throw me over. I have to sit by her side like ice, while her voice and her looks fire me with

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heavenly sensations! As I watch her gondola a few hundred feet away from my own I feel as if a hot iron were set on my heart. An invisible fluid courses through my frame and scorches my nerves, a cloud dims my sight, the air seems to me to glow as it did at Rivalta when the sunlight came through a red silk blind, and I, without her knowing it, could admire her lost in dreams, with her subtle smile like that of Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Well, either my Highness will end my days by a pistol-shot, or the heir of the Cane will follow old Carmagnola's advice; we will be sailors, pirates; and it will be amusing to see how long we can live without being hanged."

The Prince lighted another cigar, and watched the curls of smoke as the wind wafted them away, as though he saw in their arabesques an echo of this last thought.

In the distance he could now perceive the mauresque pinnacles that crowned his palazzo, and he was sadder than ever. The Duchess' gondola had vanished in the Canareggio.

These fantastic pictures of a romantic and perilous existence, as the outcome of his love, went out with his cigar, and his lady's gondola no longer traced his path. Then he saw the present in its real light: a palace without a soul, a soul that had no effect on the body, a principality without money, an empty body and a full heart—a thousand heartbreaking contradictions. The hapless youth mourned for Venice as she had been,—as did Vendramini, even more bitterly, for it was a great and common sorrow, a similar destiny, that had engendered such a warm friendship between these two young men, the wreckage of two illustrious families.

Emilio could not help dreaming of a time when the palazzo Memmi poured light from every window, and rang with music carried far away over the Adriatic tide; when hundreds of gondolas might be seen tied up to its mooring-posts, while graceful masked figures and the magnates of the Republic crowded up the steps kissed by the waters; when its halls and gallery were full of a throng of intriguers or their dupes; when the great banqueting-hall, filled with merry feasters,

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and the upper balconies furnished with musicians, seemed to harbor all Venice coming and going on the great staircase that rang with laughter.

The chisels of the greatest artists of many centuries had sculptured the bronze brackets supporting long-necked or pot-bellied Chinese vases, and the candelabra for a thousand tapers. Every country had furnished some contribution to the splendor that decked the walls and ceilings. But now the panels were stripped of the handsome hangings, the melancholy ceilings were speechless and sad. No Turkey carpets, no lustres bright with flowers, no statues, no pictures, no more joy, no money—the great means to enjoyment! Venice, the London of the Middle Ages, was falling stone by stone, man by man. The ominous green weed which the sea washes and kisses at the foot of every palace, was, in the Prince's eyes, a black fringe hung by nature as an omen of death.

And finally, a great English poet had rushed down on Venice like a raven on a corpse, to croak out in lyric poetry—the first and last utterance of social man—the burden of a *de profundis.* English poetry! Flung in the face of the city that had given birth to Italian poetry! Poor Venice!

Conceive, then, of the young man's amazement when roused from such meditations by Carmagnola's cry:

"Serenissimo, the palazzo is on fire, or the old Doges have risen from their tombs! There are lights in the windows of the upper floor!"

Prince Emilio fancied that his dream was realized by the touch of a magic wand. It was dusk, and the old gondolier could by tying up his gondola to the top step, help his young master to land without being seen by the bustling servants in the palazzo, some of whom were buzzing about the landing-place like bees at the door of a hive. Emilio stole into the great hall, whence rose the finest flight of stairs in all Venice, up which he lightly ran to investigate the cause of this strange bustle.

A whole tribe of workmen were hurriedly completing the furnishing and redecoration of the palace. The first floor,

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worthy of the antique glories of Venice, displayed to Emilio's waking eyes the magnificence of which he had just been dreaming, and the fairy had exercised admirable taste. Splendor worthy of a parvenu sovereign was to be seen even in the smallest details. Emilio wandered about without remark from anybody, and surprise followed on surprise.

Curious, then, to know what was going forward on the second floor, he went up, and found everything finished. The unknown laborers, commissioned by a wizard to revive the marvels of the Arabian nights in behalf of an impoverished Italian prince, were exchanging some inferior articles of furniture brought in for the nonce. Prince Emilio made his way into the bedroom, which smiled on him like a shell just deserted by Venus. The room was so charmingly pretty, so daintily smart, so full of elegant contrivance, that he straightway seated himself in an armchair of gilt wood, in front of which a most appetizing cold supper stood ready, and, without more ado, proceeded to eat.

"In all the world there is no one but Massimilla who would have thought of this surprise," thought he. "She heard that I was now a prince; Duke Cataneo is perhaps dead, and has left her his fortune; she is twice as rich as she was; she will marry me——"

And he ate in a way that would have roused the envy of an invalid Crœsus, if he could have seen him; and he drank floods of capital port wine.

"Now I understand the knowing little air she put on as she said, 'Till this evening!' Perhaps she means to come and break the spell. What a fine bed! and in the bed-place such a pretty lamp! Quite a Florentine idea!"

There are some strongly blended natures on which extremes of joy or of grief have a soporific effect. Now on a youth so compounded that he could idealize his mistress to the point of ceasing to think of her as a woman, this sudden incursion of wealth had the effect of a dose of opium. When the Prince had drunk the whole of the bottle of port, eaten half a fish and some portion of a French pâté, he felt an irresistible

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longing for bed. Perhaps he was suffering from a double intoxication. So he pulled off the counterpane, opened the bed, undressed in a pretty dressing-room, and lay down to meditate on destiny.

"I forgot poor Carmagnola," said he; "but my cook and butler will have provided for him."

At this juncture, a waiting-woman came in, lightly humming an air from the *Barbiere*. She tossed a woman's dress on a chair, a whole outfit for the night, and said as she did so:

"Here they come!"

And in fact a few minutes later a young lady came in, dressed in the latest French style, who might have sat for some English fancy portrait engraved for a *Forget-me-not*, a *Belle Assemblée*, or a *Book of Beauty*.

The Prince shivered with delight and with fear, for, as you know, he was in love with Massimilla. But, in spite of this faith in love which fired his blood, and which of old inspired the painters of Spain, which gave Italy her Madonnas, created Michael Angelo's statues and Ghiberti's doors of the Baptistery,—desire had him in its toils, and agitated him without infusing into his heart that warm, ethereal glow which he felt at a look or a word from the Duchess. His soul, his heart, his reason, every impulse of his will, revolted at the thought of an infidelity; and yet that brutal, unreasoning infidelity domineered over his spirit. But the woman was not alone.

The Prince saw one of those figures in which nobody believes when they are transferred from real life, where we wonder at them, to the imaginary existence of a more or less literary description. The dress of this stranger, like that of all Neapolitans, displayed five colors, if the black of his hat may count for a color; his trousers were olive-brown, his red waistcoat shone with gilt buttons, his coat was greenish, and his linen was more yellow than white. This personage seemed to have made it his business to verify the Neapolitan as represented by Gerolamo on the stage of his puppet show. His

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eyes looked like glass beads. His nose, like the ace of clubs, was horribly long and bulbous; in fact, it did its best to conceal an opening which it would be an insult to the human countenance to call a mouth; within, three or four tusks were visible, endowed, as it seemed, with a proper motion and fitting into each other. His fleshy ears drooped by their own weight, giving the creature a whimsical resemblance to a dog.

His complexion, tainted, no doubt, by various metallic infusions as prescribed by some Hippocrates, verged on black. A pointed skull, scarcely covered by a few straight hairs like spun glass, crowned this forbidding face with red spots. Finally, though the man was very thin and of medium height, he had long arms and broad shoulders.

In spite of these hideous details, and though he looked fully seventy, he did not lack a certain cyclopean dignity; he had aristocratic manners and the confident demeanor of a rich man.

Any one who could have found courage enough to study him, would have seen his history written by base passions on this noble clay degraded to mud. Here was the man of high birth, who, rich from his earliest youth, had given up his body to debauchery for the sake of extravagant enjoyment. And debauchery had destroyed the human being and made another after its own image. Thousands of bottles of wine had disappeared under the purple archway of that preposterous nose, and left their dregs on his lips. Long and slow digestion had destroyed his teeth. His eyes had grown dim under the lamps of the gaming table. The blood tainted with impurities had vitiated the nervous system. The expenditure of force in the task of digestion had undermined his intellect. Finally, amours had thinned his hair. Each vice, like a greedy heir, had stamped possession on some part of the living body.

Those who watch nature detect her in jests of the shrewdest irony. For instance, she places toads in the neighborhood of flowers, as she had placed this man by the side of this rose of love.

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"Will you play the violin this evening, my dear Duke?" asked the woman, as she unhooked a cord to let a handsome curtain fall over the door.

"Play the violin!" thought Prince Emilio. "What can have happened to my palazzo? Am I awake? Here I am, in that woman's bed, and she certainly thinks herself at home —she has taken off her cloak! Have I, like Vendramin, inhaled opium, and am I in the midst of one of those dreams in which he sees Venice as it was three centuries ago?"

The unknown fair one, seated in front of a dressing-table blazing with wax lights, was unfastening her frippery with the utmost calmness.

"Ring for Giulia," said she; "I want to get my dress off."

At that instant, the Duke noticed that the supper had been disturbed; he looked round the room, and discovered the Prince's trousers hanging over a chair at the foot of the bed.

"Clarina, I will not ring!" cried the Duke, in a shrill voice of fury. "I will not play the violin this evening, nor tomorrow, nor ever again——"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" sang Clarina, on the four octaves of the same note, leaping from one to the next with the ease of a nightingale.

"In spite of that voice, which would make your patron saint Clara envious, you are really too impudent, you rascally hussy!"

"You have not brought me up to listen to such abuse," said she, with some pride.

"Have I brought you up to hide a man in your bed? You are unworthy alike of my generosity and of my hatred——"

"A man in my bed!" exclaimed Clarina, hastily looking round.

"And after daring to eat our supper, as if he were at home," added the Duke.

"But am I not at home?" cried Emilio. "I am the Prince of Varese; this palace is mine."

As he spoke, Emilio sat up in bed, his handsome and noble Venetian head framed in the flowing hangings.

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At first Clarina laughed—one of those irrepressible fits of laughter which seize a girl when she meets with an adventure comic beyond all conception. But her laughter ceased as she saw the young man, who, as has been said, was remarkably handsome, though but lightly attired; the madness that possessed Emilio seized her, too, and, as she had no one to adore, no sense of reason bridled her sudden fancy—a Sicilian woman in love.

"Although this is the palazzo Memmi, I will thank your Highness to quit," said the Duke, assuming the cold irony of a polished gentleman. "I am at home here."

"Let me tell you, Monsieur le Duc, that you are in my room, not in your own," said Clarina, rousing herself from her amazement. "If you have any doubts of my virtue, at any rate give me the benefit of my crime——"

"Doubts! Say proof positive, my lady!"

"I swear to you that I am innocent," replied Clarina.

"What, then, do I see in that bed?" asked the Duke.

"Old Ogre!" cried Clarina. "If you believe your eyes rather than my assertion, you have ceased to love me. Go, and do not weary my ears! Do you hear? Go, Monsieur le Duc. This young Prince will repay you the million francs I have cost you, if you insist."

"I will repay nothing," said Emilio, in an undertone.

"There is nothing due! A million is cheap for Clara Tinti when a man is so ugly. Now, go," said she to the Duke. "You dismissed me; now I dismiss you. We are quits."

At a gesture on Cataneo's part, as he seemed inclined to dispute this order, which was given with an action worthy of Semiramis,—the part in which la Tinti had won her fame,—the prima donna flew at the old ape and put him out of the room.

"If you do not leave me in quiet this evening, we never meet again. And my *never* counts for more than yours," she added.

"Quiet!" retorted the Duke, with a bitter laugh. "Dear idol, it strikes me that I am leaving you *agitata!*"

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The Duke departed.

His mean spirit was no surprise to Emilio.

Every man who has accustomed himself to some particular taste, chosen from among the various effects of love, in harmony with his own nature, knows that no consideration can stop a man who has allowed his passions to become a habit.

Clarina bounded like a fawn from the door to the bed.

"A prince, and poor, young, and handsome!" cried she. "Why, it is a perfect fairy tale!"

The Sicilian perched herself on the bed with the artless freedom of an animal, the yearning of a plant for the sun, the airy motion of a branch waltzing to the breeze. As she unbuttoned the wristbands of her sleeves, she began to sing, not in the pitch that won her the applause of an audience at the *Fenice,* but in a warble tender with emotion. Her song was a zephyr carrying the caresses of her love to the heart.

She stole a glance at Emilio, who was as much embarrassed as she; for this woman of the stage had lost all the boldness that had sparkled in her eyes and given decision to her voice and gestures when she dismissed the Duke. She was as humble as a courtesan who has fallen in love.

To picture la Tinta you must recall one of our best French singers when she came out in *Il Fazzoletto,* an opera by Garcia that was then being played by an Italian company at the theatre in the Rue Louvois. She was so beautiful that a Naples guardsman, having failed to win a hearing, killed himself in despair. The prima donna of the *Fenice* had the same refinement of features, the same elegant figure, and was equally young; but she had in addition the warm blood of Sicily that gave a glow to her loveliness. Her voice was fuller and richer, and she had that air of native majesty that is characteristic of Italian women.

La Tinti—whose name also resembled that which the French singer assumed—was now seventeen, and the poor Prince three-and-twenty. What mocking hand had thought it sport to bring the match so near the powder? A fragrant room hung with rose-colored silk and brilliant with wax

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lights, a bed dressed in lace, a silent palace, and Venice! Two young and beautiful creatures! every ravishment at once.

Emilio snatched up his trousers, jumped out of bed, escaped into the dressing-room, put on his clothes, came back and hurried to the door.

These were his thoughts while dressing:—

"Massimilla, beloved daughter of the Doni, in whom Italian beauty is an hereditary prerogative, you who are worthy of the portrait of *Marghérita,* one of the few canvases painted entirely by Raphael to his glory! My beautiful and saintly mistress, shall I not have deserved you if I fly from this abyss of flowers? Should I be worthy of you if I profaned a heart that is wholly yours? No; I will not fall into the vulgar snare laid for me by my rebellious senses! This girl has her Duke, mine be my Duchess!"

As he lifted the curtain, he heard a moan. The heroic lover looked round and saw Clarina on her knees, her face hidden in the bed, choking with sobs. Is it to be believed? The singer was lovelier kneeling thus, her face invisible, than even in her confusion with a glowing countenance. Her hair, which had fallen over her shoulders, her Magdalen-like attitude, the disorder of her half-unfastened dress,—the whole picture had been composed by the devil, who, as is well known, is a fine colorist.

The Prince put his arm round the weeping girl, who slipped from him like a snake, and clung to one foot, pressing it to her beautiful bosom.

"Will you explain to me," said he, shaking his foot to free it from her embrace, "how you happen to be in my palazzo? How the impoverished Emilio Memmi——"

"Emilio Memmi!" cried Tinti, rising. "You said you were a Prince."

"A Prince since yesterday."

"You are in love with the Duchess Cataneo!" said she, looking at him from head to foot.

Emilio stood mute, seeing that the prima donna was smiling at him through her tears.

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"Your Highness does not know that the man who had me trained for the stage—that the Duke—is Cataneo himself. And your friend Vendramini, thinking to do you a service, let him this palace for a thousand crowns, for the period of my season at the *Fenice*. Dear idol of my heart!" she went on, taking his hand and drawing him towards her, "why do you fly from one for whom many a man would run the risk of broken bones? Love, you see, is always love. It is the same everywhere; it is the sun of our souls; we can warm ourselves wherever it shines, and here—now—it is full noonday. If to-morrow you are not satisfied, kill me! But I shall survive, for I am a real beauty!"

Emilio decided on remaining. When he signified his consent by a nod the impulse of delight that sent a shiver through Clarina seemed to him like a light from hell. Love had never before appeared to him in so impressive a form.

At that moment Carmagnola whistled loudly.

"What can he want of me?" said the Prince.

But bewildered by love, Emilio paid no heed to the gondolier's repeated signals.

If you have never traveled in Switzerland you may perhaps read this description with pleasure; and if you have clambered among those mountains you will not be sorry to be reminded of the scenery.

In that sublime land, in the heart of a mass of rock riven by a gorge,—a valley as wide as the Avenue de Neuilly in Paris, but a hundred fathoms deep and broken into ravines,—flows a torrent coming from some tremendous height of the Saint-Gothard on the Simplon, which has formed a pool, I know not how many yards deep or how many feet long and wide, hemmed in by splintered cliffs of granite on which meadows find a place, with fir-trees between them, and enormous elms, and where violets also grow, and strawberries. Here and there stands a châlet and at the window you may see the rosy face of a yellow-haired Swiss girl. According to the moods of the sky the water in this tarn is blue and green, but as a sapphire is blue, as an emerald is green.

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Well, nothing in the world can give such an idea of depth, peace, immensity, heavenly love, and eternal happiness—to the most heedless traveler, the most hurried courier, the most commonplace tradesman—as this liquid diamond into which the snow, gathering from the highest Alps, trickles through a natural channel hidden under the trees and eaten through the rock, escaping below through a gap without a sound. The watery sheet overhanging the fall glides so gently that no ripple is to be seen on the surface which mirrors the chaise as you drive past. The postboy smacks his whip; you turn past a crag; you cross a bridge: suddenly there is a terrific uproar of cascades tumbling together one upon another. The water, taking a mighty leap, is broken into a hundred falls, dashed to spray on the boulders; it sparkles in a myriad jets against a mass that has fallen from the heights that tower over the ravine exactly in the middle of the road that has been so irresistibly cut by the most formidable of active forces.

If you have formed a clear idea of this landscape, you will see in those sleeping waters the image of Emilio's love for the Duchess, and in the cascades leaping like a flock of sheep, an idea of his passion shared with la Tinti. In the midst of his torrent of love a rock stood up against which the torrent broke. The Prince, like Sisyphus, was constantly under the stone.

"What on earth does the Duke do with a violin?" he wondered. "Do I owe this symphony to him?"

He asked Clara Tinti.

"My dear child,"—for she saw that Emilio was but a child,—"dear child," said she, "that man, who is a hundred and eighteen in the parish register of vice, and only forty-seven in the register of the Church, has but one single joy left to him in life. Yes, everything is broken, everything in him is ruin or rags; his soul, intellect, heart, nerves,—everything in man that can supply an impulse and remind him of heaven, either by desire or enjoyment, is bound up with music, or rather with one of the many effects produced by music, the perfect unison of two voices, or of a voice with the top string of his

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violin. The old ape sits on my knee, takes his instrument,—he plays fairly well,—he produces the notes, and I try to imitate them. Then, when the long-sought-for moment comes when it is impossible to distinguish in the body of sound which is the note on the violin and which proceeds from my throat, the old man falls into an ecstasy, his dim eyes light up with their last remaining fires, he is quite happy and will roll on the floor like a drunken man.

"That is why he pays Genovese such a price. Genovese is the only tenor whose voice occasionally sounds in unison with mine. Either we really do sing exactly together once or twice in an evening, or the Duke imagines that we do; and for that imaginary pleasure he has bought Genovese. Genovese belongs to him. No theatrical manager can engage that tenor without me, nor have me to sing without him. The Duke brought me up on purpose to gratify that whim; to him I owe my talent, my beauty,—my fortune, no doubt. He will die of an attack of perfect unison. The sense of hearing alone has survived the wreck of his faculties; that is the only thread by which he holds on to life. A vigorous shoot springs from that rotten stump. There are, I am told, many men in the same predicament. May Madonna preserve them!

"You have not come to that! You can do all you want—all I want of you, I know."

Towards morning the Prince stole away and found Carmagnola lying asleep across the door.

"Altezza," said the gondolier, "the Duchess ordered me to give you this note."

He held out a dainty sheet of paper folded into a triangle. The Prince felt dizzy; he went back into the room and dropped into a chair, for his sight was dim, and his hands shook as he read:—

"DEAR EMILIO:—Your gondola stopped at your palazzo. Did you not know that Cataneo has taken it for la Tinti? If you love me, go to-night to Vendramin, who tells me he

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has a room ready for you in his house. What shall I do? Can I remain in Venice to see my husband and his opera singer? Shall we go back together to Friuli? Write me one word, if only to tell me what the letter was you tossed into the lagoon.

"MASSIMILLA DONI."

The writing and the scent of the paper brought a thousand memories back to the young Venetian's mind. The sun of a single-minded passion threw its radiance on the blue depths come from so far, collected in a bottomless pool, and shining like a star. The noble youth could not restrain the tears that flowed freely from his eyes, for in the languid state produced by satiated senses he was disarmed by the thought of that purer divinity.

Even in her sleep Clarina heard his weeping; she sat up in bed, saw her Prince in a dejected attitude, and threw herself at his knees.

"They are still waiting for the answer," said Carmagnola, putting the curtain aside.

"Wretch, you have undone me!" cried Emilio, starting up and spurning Clarina with his foot.

She clutched it so lovingly, her look imploring some explanation,—the look of a tear-stained Samaritan,—that Emilio, enraged to find himself still in the toils of the passion that had wrought his fall, pushed away the singer with an unmanly kick.

"You told me to kill you,—then die, venomous reptile!" he exclaimed.

He left the palace, and sprang into his gondola.

"Pull," said he to Carmagnola.

"Where?" asked the old servant.

"Where you will."

The gondolier divined his master's wishes, and by many windings brought him at last into the Canareggio, to the door of a wonderful palazzo, which you will admire when you see Venice, for no traveler ever fails to stop in front of those

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windows, each of different design, vying with each other in fantastic ornament, with balconies like lace-work; to study the corners finishing in tall and slender twisted columns, the string-courses wrought by so inventive a chisel that no two shapes are alike in the arabesques on the stones.

How charming is that doorway! how mysterious the vaulted arcade leading to the stairs! Who could fail to admire the steps on which ingenious art has laid a carpet that will last while Venice stands,—a carpet as rich as if wrought in Turkey, but composed of marbles in endless variety of shapes, inlaid in white marble. You will delight in the charming ornament of the colonnades of the upper story,—gilt like those of the ducal palace,—so that the marvels of art are both under your feet and above your head.

What delicate shadows! How silent, how cool! But how solemn, too, was that old palace! where, to delight Emilio and his friend Vendramin, the Duchess had collected antique Venetian furniture, and employed skilled hands to restore the ceilings. There, old Venice lived again. The splendor was not merely noble, it was instructive. The archæologist would have there found such models of perfection as the middle ages produced, having taken example from Venice. Here were to be seen the original ceilings of woodwork covered with scrolls and flowers in gold on a colored ground, or in colors on gold, and ceilings of gilt plaster castings, with a picture of many figures in each corner, with a splendid fresco in the centre,—a style so costly that there are not two in the Louvre, and that the extravagance of Louis XIV. shrunk from such expense at Versailles. On all sides marble, wood, and silk had served as materials for exquisite workmanship.

Emilio pushed open a carved oak door, made his way down the long, vaulted passage which runs from end to end on each floor of a Venetian palazzo, and stopped before another door, so familiar that it made his heart beat. On seeing him, a lady companion came out of a vast drawing-room, and admitted him to a study where he found the Duchess on her knees in front of a Madonna.

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He had come to confess and ask forgiveness. Massimilla, in prayer, had converted him. He and God; nothing else dwelt in that heart.

The Duchess rose very unaffectedly, and held out her hand. Her lover did not take it.

"Did not Gianbattista see you, yesterday?" she asked.

"No," he replied.

"That piece of ill-luck gave me a night of misery. I was so afraid lest you might meet the Duke, whose perversity I know too well. What made Vendramin let your palace to him?"

"It was a good idea, Milla, for your Prince is poor enough."

Massimilla was so beautiful in her trust of him, and so wonderfully lovely, so happy in Emilio's presence, that at this moment the Prince, wide awake, experienced the sensations of the horrible dream that torments persons of a lively imagination, in which after arriving in a ballroom full of women in full dress, the dreamer is suddenly aware that he is naked, without even a shirt; shame and terror possess him by turns, and only waking can relieve him from his misery. Thus stood Emilio's soul in the presence of his mistress. Hitherto that soul had known only the fairest flowers of feeling; a debauch had plunged it into dishonor. This none knew but he, for the beautiful Florentine ascribed so many virtues to her lover that the man she adored could not but be incapable of any stain.

As Emilio had not taken her hand, the Duchess pushed her fingers through his hair that the singer had kissed. Then she perceived that Emilio's hand was clammy and his brow moist.

"What ails you?" she asked, in a voice to which tenderness gave the sweetness of a flute.

"Never till this moment have I known how much I love you," he replied.

"Well, dear idol, what would you have?" said she.

"What have I done to make her ask that?" he wondered to himself.

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"Emilio, what letter was that which you threw into the lagoon?"

"Vendramini's. I had not read it to the end, or I should never have gone to my palazzo, and there have met the Duke; for no doubt it told me all about it."

Massimilla turned pale, but a caress from Emilio reassured her.

"Stay with me all day; we will go to the opera together. We will not set out for Friuli; your presence will no doubt enable me to endure Cataneo's," said Massimilla.

Though this would be torment to her lover's soul, he consented with apparent joy.

If anything can give us a foretaste of what the damned will suffer on finding themselves so unworthy of God, is it not the state of a young man, as yet unpolluted, in the presence of a mistress he reveres, while he still feels on his lips the taste of infidelity, and brings into the sanctuary of the divinity he worships the tainted atmosphere of the courtesan?

Baader, who in his lectures eliminated things divine by erotic imagery, had no doubt observed, like some Catholic writers, the intimate resemblance between human and heavenly love.

This distress of mind cast a hue of melancholy over the pleasure the young Venetian felt in his mistress' presence. A woman's instinct has amazing aptitude for harmony of feeling; it assumes the hue, it vibrates to the note suggested by her lover. The pungent flavor of coquettish spice is far indeed from spurring affection so much as this gentle sympathy of tenderness. The smartness of a coquette too clearly marks opposition; however transient it is displeasing; but this intimate comprehension shows a perfect fusion of souls. The hapless Emilio was touched by the unspoken divination which led the Duchess to pity a fault unknown to her.

Massimilla, feeling that her strength lay in the absence of any sensual side to her love, could allow herself to be expansive; she boldly and confidently poured out her angelic spirit, she stripped it bare, just as during that diabolical

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night, la Tinti had displayed the soft lines of her body, and her firm, elastic flesh. In Emilio's eyes there was as it were a conflict between the saintly love of this white soul and that of the vehement and muscular Sicilian.

The day was spent in long looks following on deep meditations. Each of them gauged the depths of tender feeling, and found it bottomless; a conviction that brought fond words to their lips. Modesty, the goddess who in a moment of forgetfulness with Love, was the mother of Coquettishness, need not have put her hand before her face as she looked at these lovers. As a crowning joy, an orgy of happiness, Massimilla pillowed Emilio's head in her arms, and now and then ventured to press her lips to his; but only as a bird dips its beak into the clear waters of a spring, looking round lest it should be seen. Their fancy worked upon this kiss, as a composer develops a subject by the endless resources of music, and it produced in them such tumultuous and vibrating echoes as fevered their blood.

The Idea must always be stronger than the Fact, otherwise desire would be less perfect than satisfaction, and it is in fact the stronger,—it gives birth to wit. And, indeed, they were perfectly happy; for enjoyment must always take something off happiness. Married in heaven alone, these two lovers admired each other in their purest aspect,—that of two souls incandescent, and united in celestial light, radiant to the eyes that faith has touched; and, above all, filled with the rapture which the brush of a Raphael, a Titian, a Murillo, has depicted, and which those who have ever known it, taste again as they gaze at those paintings. Do not such peerless spirits scorn the coarser joys lavished by the Sicilian singer—the material expression of that angelic union?

These noble thoughts were in the Prince's mind as he reposed in heavenly calm on Massimilla's cool, soft, white bosom, under the gentle radiance of her eyes veiled by long, bright lashes; and he gave himself up to this dream of an ideal orgy. At such a moment, Massimilla was as one of the Virgin visions seen in dreams, which vanish at cock-crow,

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but whom we recognize when we find them again in their realm of glory,—in the works of some great painters of Heaven.

In the evening the lovers went to the theatre. This is the way of Italian life: love in the morning; music in the evening; the night for sleep. How far preferable is this existence to that of a country where every one expends his lungs and strength in politics, without contributing any more, single-handed, to the progress of affairs than a grain of sand can make a cloud of dust. Liberty, in those strange lands, consists in the right to squabble over public concerns, to take care of oneself, to waste time in patriotic undertakings each more futile than the last, inasmuch as they all weaken that noble, holy self-concern which is the parent of all great human achievement. At Venice, on the contrary, love and its myriad ties, the sweet business of real happiness, fills up all the time.

In that country, love is so much a matter of course that the Duchess was regarded as a wonder; for, in spite of her violent attachment to Emilio, everybody was confident of her immaculate purity. And women gave their sincere pity to the poor young man, who was regarded as a victim to the virtue of his lady-love. At the same time, no one cared to blame the Duchess, for in Italy religion is a power as much respected as love.

Evening after evening Massimilla's box was the first object of every opera-glass, and each woman would say to her lover, as she studied the Duchess and her adorer:

"How far have they got?"

The lover would examine Emilio, seeking some evidence of success; would find no expression but that of a pure and dejected passion. And throughout the house, as they visited from box to box, the men would say to the ladies:

"La Cataneo is not yet Emilio's."

"She is unwise," said the old women. "She will tire him out."

"Forse!" (Perhaps) the young wives would reply, with the

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solemn accent that Italians can infuse into that great word—the answer to many questions here below.

Some women were indignant, thought the whole thing ill-judged, and declared that it was a misapprehension of religion to allow it to smother love.

"My dear, love that poor Emilio," said the Signora Vulpato to Massimilla, as they met on the stairs in going out.

"I do love him with all my might," replied the Duchess.

"Then why does not he look happy?"

Massimilla's reply was a little shrug of her shoulders.

We in France—France as the growing mania for English proprieties has made it—can form no idea of the serious interest taken in this affair by Venetian society.

Vendramini alone knew Emilio's secret, which was carefully kept between two men who had, for private pleasure, combined their coats of arms with the motto *Non amici, frates.*

The opening night of the opera season is an event at Venice, as in every capital in Italy. The *Fenice* was crowded.

The five hours of the night that are spent at the theatre fill so important a place in Italian life that it is well to give an account of the customs that have arisen from this manner of spending time.

The boxes in Italy are unlike those of any other country, inasmuch as that elsewhere the women go to be seen, and that Italian ladies do not care to make a show of themselves. Each box is long and narrow, sloping at an angle to the front and to the passage behind. On each side is a sofa, and at the end stand two armchairs, one for the mistress of the box, and the other for a lady friend when she brings one, which she rarely does. Each lady is in fact too much engaged in her own box to call on others, or to wish to see them; also no one cares to introduce a rival. An Italian woman almost always reigns alone in her box; the mothers are not the slaves of their daughters, the daughters have no mother on their hands; thus there are no children, no relations to watch and censure and bore, or cut into a conversation.

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In front every box is draped in the same way, with the same silk: from the cornice hang curtains, also all to match; and these remain drawn when the family to whom the box belongs is in mourning. With very few exceptions, and those only at Milan, there is no light inside the box; they are illuminated only from the stage, and from a not very brilliant hanging lustre which, in spite of protests, has been introduced into the house in some towns; still, screened by the curtains, they are never very light, and their arrangement leaves the back of the box so dark that it is very difficult to see what is going on.

The boxes, large enough to accommodate eight or ten persons, are decorated with handsome silks, the ceilings are painted and ornamented in light and pleasing colors; the woodwork is gilt. Ices and sorbets are served there, and sweetmeats; for only the plebeian classes ever have a serious meal. Each box is freehold property, and of considerable value; some are estimated at as much as thirty thousand lire; the Litta family at Milan own three adjoining. These facts sufficiently indicate the importance attributed to this incident of fashionable life.

Conversation reigns supreme in this little apartment, which Stendhal, one of the most ingenious of modern writers, and a keen student of Italian manners, has called a boudoir with a window opening on to a pit. The music and the spectacle are in fact purely accessory; the real interest of the evening is in the social meeting there, the all-important trivialities of love that are discussed, the assignations held, the anecdotes and gossip that creep in. The theatre is an inexpensive meeting-place for a whole society which is content and amused with studying itself.

The men who are admitted take their seats on one of the sofas, in the order of their arrival. The first comer naturally is next to the mistress of the box, but when both seats are full, if another visitor comes in, the one who has sat longest rises, takes his leave, and departs. All move up one place, and so each in turn is next the sovereign.

This futile gossip, or serious colloquy, these elegant triv-

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ialities of Italian life, inevitably imply some general intimacy. The lady may be in full dress or not, as she pleases. She is so completely at home that a stranger who has been received in her box may call on her next day at her residence. The foreign visitor cannot at first understand this life of idle wit, this *dolce far niente* on a background of music. Only long custom and keen observation can ever reveal to a foreigner the meaning of Italian life, which is like the free sky of the south, and where a rich man will not endure a cloud. A man of rank cares little about the management of his fortune; he leaves the details to his stewards (*ragionati*), who rob and ruin him. He has no instinct for politics, and they would presently bore him; he lives exclusively for passion, which fills up all his time; hence the necessity felt by the lady and her lover for being constantly together, either to charm or to keep each other; for the great feature of such a life is the lover, who for five hours is kept under the eye of a woman who has had him at her feet all day. Thus Italian habits allow of perpetual satisfaction, and necessitate a constant study of the means fitted to insure it, though hidden under apparent light-heartedness.

It is a beautiful life, but a reckless one, and in no country in the world are men so often found worn out.

The Duchess' box was on the pit tier—*pepiano,* as it is called in Venice; she always sat where the light from the stage fell on her face, so that her handsome head, softly illuminated, stood out against the dark background. The Florentine attracted every gaze by her broad, high brow, as white as snow, crowned with plaits of black hair that gave her a really royal look; by the refinement of her features, resembling the noble features of Andrea del Sarto's heads; by the outline of her face, the setting of her eyes; and by those velvet eyes themselves, which spoke of the rapture of a woman dreaming of happiness, still pure though loving, at once attractive and dignified.

Instead of *Mosè,* in which la Tinti was to have appeared with Genovese, *Il Barbiere* was given, and the tenor was to

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sing without the celebrated prima donna. The manager announced that he had been obliged to change the opera in consequence of la Tinti's being ill; and the Duke was not to be seen in the theatre.

Was this a clever trick on the part of the management, to secure two full houses by bringing out Genovese and Tinti separately, or was Clarina's indisposition genuine? While this was open to discussion by others, Emilio might be better informed; and though the announcement caused him some remorse, as he remembered the singer's beauty and vehemence, her absence and the Duke's put both the Prince and the Duchess very much at their ease.

And Genovese sang in such a way as to drive out all memories of a night of illicit love, and to prolong the heavenly joys of this blissful day. Happy to be alone to receive the applause of the house, the tenor did his best with the powers which have since achieved European fame. Genovese, then but three-and-twenty, born at Bergamo, a pupil of Veluti's and devoted to his art, a fine man, good-looking, clever in apprehending the spirit of a part, was already developing into the great artist destined to win fame and fortune. He had a wild success,—a phrase which is literally exact only in Italy, where the applause of the house is absolutely frenzied when a singer procures it enjoyment.

Some of the Prince's friends came to congratulate him on coming into his title, and to discuss the news. Only last evening la Tinti, taken by the Duke to the Vulpatos', had sung there, apparently in health as sound as her voice was fine; hence her sudden indisposition gave rise to much comment. It was rumored at the Café Florian that Genovese was desperately in love with Clarina; that she was only anxious to avoid his declarations, and that the manager had tried in vain to induce her to appear with him. The Austrian General, on the other hand, asserted that it was the Duke who was ill, that the prima donna was nursing him, and that Genovese had been commanded to make amends to the public.

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The Duchess owed this visit from the Austrian General to the fact that a French physician had come to Venice whom the General wished to introduce to her. The Prince, seeing Vendramin wandering about the *parterre,* went out for a few minutes of confidential talk with his friend, whom he had not seen for three months; and as they walked round the gangway which divides the seats in the pit from the lowest tier of boxes, he had an opportunity of observing Massimilla's reception of the foreigner.

"Who is that Frenchman?" asked the Prince.

"A physician sent for by Cataneo, who wants to know how long he is likely to live," said Vendramin. "The Frenchman is waiting for Malfatti, with whom he is to hold a consultation."

Like every Italian woman who is in love, the Duchess kept her eyes fixed on Emilio; for in that land a woman is so wholly wrapped up in her lover that it is difficult to detect an expressive glance directed at anybody else.

"Caro," said the Prince to his friend, "remember I slept at your house last night."

"Have you triumphed?" said Vendramin, putting his arm round Emilio's waist.

"No; but I hope I may some day be happy with Massimilla."

"Well," replied Marco, "then you will be the most envied man on earth. The Duchess is the most perfect woman in Italy. To me, seeing things as I do through the dazzling medium of opium, she seems the very highest expression of art; for nature, without knowing it, has made her a Raphael picture. Your passion gives no umbrage to Cataneo, who has handed over to me a thousand crowns, which I am to give to you."

"Well," added Emilio, "whatever you may hear said, I sleep every night at your house. Come, for every minute spent away from her, when I might be with her, is torment."

Emilio took his seat at the back of the box and remained there in silence, listening to the Duchess, enchanted by her

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wit and beauty. It was for him, and not out of vanity, that Massimilla lavished the charms of her conversation bright with Italian wit, in which sarcasm lashed things but not persons, laughter attacked nothing that was not laughable, mere trifles were seasoned with Attic salt.

Anywhere else she might have been tiresome. The Italians, an eminently intelligent race, have no fancy for displaying their talents where they are not in demand; their chat is perfectly simple and effortless, it never makes play, as in France, under the lead of a fencing master, each one flourishing his foil, or, if he has nothing to say, sitting humiliated.

Conversation sparkles with a delicate and subtle satire that plays gracefully with familiar facts; and instead of a compromising epigram an Italian has a glance or a smile of unutterable meaning. They think—and they are right—that to be expected to understand ideas when they only seek enjoyment, is a bore.

Indeed, la Vulpato had said to Massimilla:

"If you loved him, you would not talk so well."

Emilio took no part in the conversation; he listened and gazed. This reserve might have led foreigners to suppose that the Prince was a man of no intelligence,—their impression very commonly of an Italian in love,—whereas he was simply a lover up to his ears in rapture. Vendramin sat down by Emilio, opposite the Frenchman, who, as the stranger, occupied the corner facing the Duchess.

"Is that gentleman drunk?" said the physician in an undertone to Massimilla, after looking at Vendramin.

"Yes," replied she, simply.

In that land of passion, each passion bears its excuse in itself, and gracious indulgence is shown to every form of error. The Duchess sighed deeply, and an expression of suppressed pain passed over her features.

"You will see strange things in our country, monsieur," she went on. "Vendramin lives on opium, as this one lives on love, and that one buries himself in learning; most young men have a passion for a dancer, as older men are miserly.

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We all create some happiness or some madness for ourselves."

"Because you all want to divert your minds from some fixed idea, for which a revolution would be a radical cure," replied the physician. "The Genoese regrets his republic, the Milanese pines for his independence, the Piemontese longs for a constitutional government, the Romagna cries for liberty——"

"Of which it knows nothing," interrupted the Duchess. "Alas! there are men in Italy so stupid as to long for your idiotic Charter, which destroys the influence of woman. Most of my fellow-countrywomen must need read your French books—useless rhodomontade——"

"Useless!" cried the Frenchman.

"Why, monsieur," the Duchess went on, "what can you find in a book that is better than what we have in our hearts? Italy is mad."

"I cannot see that a people is mad because it wishes to be its own master," said the physician.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Duchess, eagerly, "does not that mean paying with a great deal of bloodshed for the right of quarreling, as you do, over crazy ideas?"

"Then you approve of despotism?" said the physician.

"Why should I not approve of a system of government which, by depriving us of books and odious politics, leaves men entirely to us?"

"I had thought that the Italians were more patriotic," said the Frenchman.

Massimilla laughed so slyly that her interlocutor could not distinguish mockery from serious meaning, nor her real opinion from ironical criticism.

"Then you are not a liberal?" said he.

"Heaven preserve me!" said she. "I can imagine nothing in worse taste than such opinions in a woman. Could you love a woman whose heart was occupied by all mankind?"

"Those who love are naturally aristocrats," the Austrian General observed, with a smile.

"As I came into the theatre," the Frenchman observed,

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"you were the first person I saw; and I remarked to his Excellency that if there was a woman who could personify a nation it was you. But I grieve to discover that, though you represent its divine beauty, you have not the constitutional spirit."

"Are you not bound," said the Duchess, pointing to the ballet now being danced, "to find all our dancers detestable and our singers atrocious? Paris and London rob us of all our leading stars. Paris passes judgment on them, and London pays them. Genovese and la Tinti will not be left to us for six months——"

At this juncture, the Austrian left the box. Vendramin, the Prince, and the two other Italians exchanged a look and a smile, glancing at the French physician. He, for a moment, felt doubtful of himself,—a rare thing in a Frenchman,—fancying he had said or done something incongruous; but the riddle was immediately solved.

"Do you think it would be judicious," said Emilio, "if we spoke our mind in the presence of our masters?"

"You are in a land of slaves," said the Duchess, in a tone and with a droop of the head which gave her at once the look for which the physician had sought in vain. "Vendramin," she went on, speaking so that only the stranger could hear her, "took to smoking opium, a villainous idea suggested to him by an Englishman who, for other reasons than his, craved an easy death—not death as men see it in the form of a skeleton, but death draped with the frippery you in France call a flag—a maiden form crowned with flowers or laurels; she appears in a cloud of gunpowder borne on the flight of a cannon-ball—or else stretched on a bed between two courtesans; or again, she rises in the steam of a bowl of punch, or the dazzling vapor of a diamond—but a diamond in the form of carbon.

"Whenever Vendramin chooses, for three Austrian lire, he can be a Venetian Captain, he can sail in the galleys of the Republic, and conquer the gilded domes of Constantinople. Then he can lounge on the divans in the Seraglio

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among the Sultan's wives, while the Grand Signor himself is the slave of the Venetian conqueror. He returns to restore his palazzo with the spoils of the Ottoman Empire. He can quit the women of the East for the doubly masked intrigues of his beloved Venetians, and fancy that he dreads the jealousy which has ceased to exist.

"For three zwanziger he can transport himself into the Council of Ten, can wield there terrible power, and leave the Doges' Palace to sleep under the watch of a pair of flashing eyes, or to climb a balcony from which a fair hand has hung a silken ladder. He can love a woman to whom opium lends such poetic grace as we women of flesh and blood could never show.

"Presently he turns over, and he is face to face with the dreadful frown of the senator, who holds a dagger. He hears the blade plunged into his mistress' heart. She dies smiling on him; for she has saved him.

"And she is a happy woman!" added the Duchess, looking at Emilio.

"He escapes and flies to command the Dalmatians, to conquer the Illyrian coast for his beloved Venice. His glory wins him forgiveness, and he enjoys a life of domestic happiness,—a home, a winter evening, a young wife, and charming children, who pray to San Marco under the care of an old nurse. Yes, for three francs' worth of opium he furnishes our empty arsenal, he watches convoys of merchandise coming in, going to the four quarters of the world. The forces of modern industry no longer reign in London, but in his own Venice, where the hanging gardens of Semiramis, the Temple of Jerusalem, the marvels of Rome, live once more. He adds to the glories of the middle ages by the labors of steam, by new masterpieces of art under the protection of Venice, who protected it of old. Monuments and nations crowd into his little brain; there is room for them all. Empires and cities and revolutions come and vanish in the course of a few hours, while Venice alone expands and lives; for the Venice of his dreams is the empress of the seas. She has two

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millions of inhabitants, the sceptre of Italy, the mastery of the Mediterranean and the Indies!"

"What an opera is the brain of man! What an unfathomed abyss!—even to those who, like Gall, have mapped it out," cried the physician.

"Dear Duchess," said Vendramin, "do not omit the last service that my elixir will do me. After hearing ravishing voices and imbibing music through every pore, after experiencing the keenest pleasures and the fiercest delights of Mahomet's paradise, I see none but the most terrible images. I have visions of my beloved Venice full of children's faces, distorted, like those of the dying; of women covered with dreadful wounds, torn and wailing; of men mangled and crushed by the copper sides of crashing vessels. I begin to see Venice as she is, shrouded in crape, stripped, robbed, destitute. Pale phantoms wander through her streets!

"Already the Austrian soldiers are grinning over me, already my visionary life is drifting into real life; whereas six months ago real life was the bad dream, and the life of opium held love and bliss, important affairs and political interests. Alas! To my grief, I see the dawn over my tomb, where truth and falsehood mingle in a dubious light, which is neither day nor darkness, but partakes of both."

"So you see that in this head there is too much patriotism," said the Prince, laying his hand on the thick black curls that fell on Vendramin's brow.

"Oh, if he loves us he will give up his dreadful opium!" said Massimilla.

"I will cure your friend," said the Frenchman.

"Achieve that, and we shall love you," said the Duchess. "But if on your return to France you do not calumniate us, we shall love you even better. The hapless Italians are too much crushed by foreign dominion to be fairly judged—for we have known yours," she added, with a smile.

"It was more generous than Austria's," said the physician, eagerly.

"Austria squeezes and gives us nothing back, and you

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squeeze to enlarge and beautify our towns; you stimulated us by giving us an army. You thought you could keep Italy, and they expect to lose it—there lies the difference.

"The Austrians provide us with a sort of ease that is as stultifying and heavy as themselves, while you overwhelmed us by your devouring energy. But whether we die of tonics or of narcotics, what does it matter? It is death all the same, Monsieur le docteur."

"Unhappy Italy! In my eyes she is like a beautiful woman whom France ought to protect by making her his mistress," exclaimed the Frenchman.

"But you could not love us as we wish to be loved," said the Duchess, smiling. "We want to be free. But the liberty I crave is not your ignoble and middle-class liberalism, which would kill all art. I ask," said she, in a tone that thrilled through the box,—"that is to say, I would ask,—that each Italian republic should be resuscitated, with its nobles, its citizens, its special privileges for each caste. I would have the old aristocratic republics once more with their intestine warfare and rivalry that gave birth to the noblest works of art, that created politics, that raised up the great princely houses. By extending the action of one government over a vast expanse of country it is frittered down. The Italian republics were the glory of Europe in the middle ages. Why has Italy succumbed when the Swiss, who were her porters, have triumphed?"

"The Swiss republics," said the doctor, "were worthy housewives, busy with their own little concerns, and neither having any cause for envying another. Your republics were haughty queens, preferring to sell themselves rather than bow to a neighbor; they fell too low ever to rise again. The Guelphs are triumphant."

"Do not pity us too much," said the Duchess, in a voice that made the two friends start. "We are still supreme. Even in the depths of her misfortune Italy governs through the choicer spirits that abound in her cities.

"Unfortunately the greater number of her geniuses learn

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to understand life so quickly that they lie sunk in poverty-stricken pleasure. As for those who are willing to play the melancholy game for immortality, they know how to get at your gold and to secure your praises. Ay, in this land—pitied for its fallen state by traveled simpletons and hypocritical poets, while its character is traduced by politicians—in this land, which appears so languid, powerless, and ruinous, worn out rather than old, there are puissant brains in every branch of life, genius throwing out vigorous shoots as an old vine-stock throws out canes productive of delicious fruit. This race of ancient rulers still gives birth to kings—Lagrange, Volta, Rasori, Canova, Rossini, Bartolini, Galvani, Vigano, Beccaria, Cicognara, Corvetto. These Italians are masters of the scientific peaks on which they stand, or of the arts to which they devote themselves. To say nothing of the singers and executants who captivate Europe by their amazing perfection: Taglioni, Paganini, and the rest. Italy still rules the world which will always come to worship her.

"Go to Florian's to-night; you will find in Capraja one of our cleverest men, but in love with obscurity. No one but the Duke, my master, understands music so thoroughly as he does; indeed he is known here as *il Fanatico.*"

After sitting a few minutes listening to the eager war of words between the physician and the Duchess, who showed much ingenious eloquence, the Italians, one by one, took leave, and went off to tell the news in every box, that la Cataneo, who was regarded as a woman of great wit and spirit, had, on the question of Italy, defeated a famous French doctor. This was the talk of the evening.

As soon as the Frenchman found himself alone with the Duchess and the Prince, he understood that they were to be left together, and took leave. Massimilla bowed with a bend of the neck that placed him at such a distance that this salute might have secured her the man's hatred, if he could have ignored the charm of her eloquence and beauty.

Thus at the end of the opera, Emilio and Massimilla were

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alone, and holding hands they listened together to the duet that finishes *Il Barbiere*.

"There is nothing but music to express love," said the Duchess, moved by that song as of two rapturous nightingales.

A tear twinkled in Emilio's eye; Massimilla, sublime in such beauty as beams in Raphael's Saint-Cecilia, pressed his hand, their knees touched, there was, as it seemed, the blossom of a kiss on her lips. The Prince saw on her blushing face a glow of joy like that which on a summer's day shines down on the golden harvest; his heart seemed bursting with the tide of blood that rushed to it. He fancied he could hear an angelic chorus of voices, and he would have given his life to feel the fire of passion which at this hour last night had filled him for the odious Clarina; but he was at the moment hardly conscious of having a body.

Massimilla, much distressed, ascribed this tear, in her guilelessness, to the remark she had made as to Genovese's cavatina.

"But, *carino*," said she in Emilio's ear, "are not you as far better than every expression of love, as cause is superior to effect?"

After handing the Duchess to her gondola, Emilio waited for Vendramin to go to Florian's.

The Café Florian at Venice is a quite undefinable institution. Merchants transact their business there, and lawyers meet to talk over their most difficult cases. Florian's is at once an Exchange, a green-room, a newspaper office, a club, a confessional,—and it is so well adapted to the needs of the place that some Venetian women never know what their husband's business may be, for, if they have a letter to write, they go to write it there.

Spies, of course, abound at Florian's; but their presence only sharpens Venetian wits, which may here exercise the discretion once so famous. A great many persons spend the whole day at Florian's; in fact, to some men Florian's is

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so much a matter of necessity, that between the acts of an opera they leave the ladies in their boxes and take a turn to hear what is going on there.

While the two friends were walking in the narrow streets of the Merceria they did not speak, for there were too many people; but as they turned into the Piazza di San Marco, the Prince said:

"Do not go at once to the café. Let us walk about; I want to talk to you."

He related his adventure with Clarina and explained his position. To Vendramin Emilio's despair seemed so nearly allied to madness that he promised to cure him completely if only he would give him *carte blanche* to deal with Massimilla. This ray of hope came just in time to save Emilio from drowning himself that night; for, indeed, as he remembered the singer, he felt a horrible wish to go back to her.

The two friends then went to an inner room at Florian's, where they listened to the conversation of some of the superior men of the town, who discoursed the subjects of the day. The most interesting of these were, in the first place, the eccentricities of Lord Byron, of whom the Venetians made great sport; then Cataneo's attachment for la Tinti, for which no reason could be assigned after twenty different causes had been suggested; then Genovese's debut; finally, the tilting match between the Duchess and the French doctor. Just as the discussion had become vehemently musical, Duke Cataneo made his appearance. He bowed very courteously to Emilio, which seemed so natural that no one noticed it, and Emilio bowed gravely in return. Cataneo looked round to see if there was anybody he knew, recognized Vendramin and greeted him, bowed to his banker, a rich patrician, and finally to the man who happened to be speaking,—a celebrated musical fanatic, a friend of the Comtessa Albrizzi. Like some others who frequented Florian's, his mode of life was absolutely unknown, so carefully did he conceal it. Nothing was known about him but what he chose to tell.

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This was Capraja, the nobleman whom the Duchess had mentioned to the French doctor. This Venetian was one of a class of dreamers whose powerful minds divine everything. He was an eccentric theorist, and cared no more for celebrity than for a broken pipe.

His life was in accordance with his ideas. Capraja made his appearance at about ten every morning under the *Procuratie,* without anyone knowing whence he came. He lounged about Venice, smoking cigars. He regularly went to the Fenice, sitting in the pit-stalls, and between the acts went round to Florian's, where he took three or four cups of coffee a day; and he ended the evening at the café, never leaving it till about two in the morning. Twelve hundred francs a year paid all his expenses; he ate but one meal a day at an eating-house in the Merceria, where the cook had his dinner ready for him at a fixed hour, on a little table at the back of the shop; the pastry-cook's daughter herself prepared his stuffed oysters, provided him with cigars, and took care of his money. By his advice, this girl, though she was very handsome, would never countenance a lover, lived very steadily, and still wore the old Venetian costume. This purely-bred Venetian girl was twelve years old when Capraja first took an interest in her, and six-and-twenty when he died. She was very fond of him, though he had never even kissed her hand or her brow, and she knew nothing whatever of the poor old nobleman's intentions with regard to her. The girl had at last as complete control of the old gentleman as a mother has of her child; she would tell him when he wanted clean linen; next day he would come without a shirt, and she would give him a clean one to put on in the morning.

He never looked at a woman either in the theatre or out walking. Though he was the descendant of an old patrician family, he never thought his rank worth mentioning. But at night, after twelve, he awoke from his apathy, talked, and showed that he had seen and heard everything. This peaceful Diogenes, quite incapable of explaining his tenets, half a Turk, half a Venetian, was thick-set, short, and fat; he had

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a Doge's sharp nose, an inquisitive, satirical eye, and a discreet though smiling mouth.

When he died, it became known that he had lived in a little den near San Benedetto. He had two million francs invested in the funds of various countries of Europe, and had left the interest untouched ever since he had first bought the securities in 1814, so the sum was now enormous, alike from the increased value of the capital and the accumulated interest. All this money was left to the pastry-cook's daughter.

"Genovese," he was saying, "will do wonders. Whether he really understands the great end of music, or acts only on instinct, I know not; but he is the first singer who ever satisfied me. I shall not die without hearing a *cadenza* executed as I have heard them in my dreams, waking with a feeling as though the sounds were floating in the air. The clear *cadenza* is the highest achievement of art; it is the arabesque, decorating the finest room in the house; a shade too little and it is nothing, a touch too much and all is confusion. Its task is to awake in the soul a thousand dormant ideas; it flies up, and sweeps through space, scattering seeds in the air to be taken in by our ears and blossom in our heart. Believe me, in painting his Saint-Cecilia, Raphael gave the preference to music over poetry. And he was right; music appeals to the heart, whereas writing is addressed to the intellect; it communicates ideas directly, like a perfume. The singer's voice impinges not on the mind, not on the memory of happiness, but on the first principle of thought; it stirs the elements of sensation.

"It is a grievous thing that the populace should have compelled musicians to adapt their expression to words, to factitious emotions; but then they were not otherwise intelligible to the vulgar. Thus the *cadenza* is the only thing left to the lovers of pure music, the devotees of unfettered art. To-night, as I listened to that last *cavatina,* I felt as if I were beckoned by a fair creature whose look alone had made me young again. The enchantress placed a crown

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on my brow, and led me to the ivory door through which we pass to the mysterious land of day-dreams. I owe it to Genovese that I escaped for a few minutes from this old husk—minutes, short no doubt by the clock, but very long by the record of sensation. For a brief spring-time, scented with roses, I was young again—and beloved!"

"But you are mistaken, *caro* Capraja," said the Duke. "There is in music an effect yet more magical than that of the *cadenza*."

"What is that?" asked Capraja.

"The unison of two voices, or of a voice and a violin,—the instrument which has tones most nearly resembling those of the human voice," replied Cataneo. "This perfect concord bears us on to the very heart of life, on the tide of elements which can resuscitate rapture and carry man up to the centre of the luminous sphere where his mind can command the whole universe. You still need a *thema*, Capraja, but the pure element is enough for me. You need that the current should flow through the myriad canals of the machine to fall in dazzling cascades, while I am content with the pure tranquil pool. My eye gazes across a lake without a ripple. I can embrace the infinite."

"Speak no more, Cataneo," said Capraja, haughtily. "What! Do you fail to see the fairy, who, in her swift rush through the sparkling atmosphere, collects and binds with the golden thread of harmony, the gems of melody she smilingly sheds on us? Have you never felt the touch of her magic wand, as she says to Curiosity, 'Awake!' The divinity rises up radiant from the depths of the brain; she flies to her store of wonders and fingers them lightly as an organist touches the keys. Suddenly, up starts Memory, bringing us the roses of the past, divinely preserved and still fresh. The mistress of our youth revives, and strokes the young man's hair. Our heart, too full, overflows; we see the flowery banks of the torrent of love. Every burning bush we ever knew blazes afresh, and repeats the heavenly words we once heard and understood. The voice rolls on;

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it embraces in its rapid turns those fugitive horizons, and they shrink away; they vanish, eclipsed by newer and deeper joys—those of an unrevealed future, to which the fairy points as she returns to the blue heaven."

"And you," retorted Cataneo, "have you never seen the direct ray of a star opening the vistas above; have you never mounted on that beam which guides you to the sky, to the heart of the first causes which move the worlds?"

To their hearers, the Duke and Capraja were playing a game of which the premises were unknown.

"Genovese's voice thrills through every fibre," said Capraja.

"And la Tinti's fires the blood," replied the Duke.

"What a paraphrase of happy love is that *cavatina!*" Capraja went on. "Ah! Rossini was young when he wrote that interpretation of effervescent ecstasy. My heart filled with renewed blood, a thousand cravings tingled in my veins. Never have sounds more angelic delivered me more completely from my earthly bonds! Never did the fairy wave more beautiful arms, smile more invitingly, lift her tunic more cunningly to display an ankle, raising the curtain that hides my other life!"

"To-morrow, my old friend," replied Cataneo, "you shall ride on the back of a dazzling, white swan, who will show you the loveliest land there is; you shall see the spring-time as children see it. Your heart shall open to the radiance of a new sun; you shall sleep on crimson silk, under the gaze of a Madonna; you shall feel like a happy lover gently kissed by a nymph whose bare feet you still may see, but who is about to vanish. That swan will be the voice of Genovese, if he can unite it to its Leda, the voice of Clarina. To-morrow night we are to hear *Mosè,* the grandest opera produced by Italy's greatest genius."

All present left the conversation to the Duke and Capraja, not wishing to be the victims of mystification. Only Vendramin and the French doctor listened to them for a few minutes. The opium-smoker understood these poetic flights; he had the key of the palace where those two sensuous im-

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aginations were wandering. The doctor, too, tried to understand, and he understood, for he was one of the Pleiades of genius belonging to the Paris school of medicine, from which a true physician comes out as much a metaphysician as an accomplished analyst.

"Do you understand them?" said Emilio to Vendramin, as they left the café at two in the morning.

"Yes, my dear boy," said Vendramin, taking Emilio home with him. "Those two men are of the legion of unearthly spirits to whom it is given here below to escape from the wrappings of the flesh, who can fly on the shoulders of the queen of witchcraft up to the blue empyrean where the sublime marvels are wrought of the intellectual life; they, by the power of art, can soar whither your immense love carries you, whither opium transports me. Then none can understand them but those who are like them.

"I, who can inspire my soul by such base means, who can pack a hundred years of life into a single night, I can understand those lofty spirits when they talk of that glorious land, deemed a realm of chimeras by some who think themselves wise; but the realm of reality to us whom they think mad. Well, the Duke and Capraja, who were acquainted at Naples,—where Cataneo was born,—are mad about music."

"But what is that strange system that Capraja was eager to explain to the Duke? Did you understand?"

"Yes," replied Vendramin. "Capraja's great friend is a musician from Cremona, lodging in the Capello palace, who has a theory that sounds meet with an element in man, analogous to that which produces the phenomena of light, and which produces ideas. According to him, man has within him keys acted on by sound, and corresponding to his nerve-centres, where ideas and sensations take their rise. Capraja, who regards the arts as an assemblage of means by which he can harmonize, in himself, all external nature with another mysterious nature that he calls the inner life, shares all the ideas of this instrument-maker, who at this moment is composing an opera.

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"Conceive of a sublime creation, wherein the marvels of the visible universe are reproduced with immeasurable grandeur, lightness, swiftness, and extension; wherein sensation is infinite, and whither certain privileged natures, possessed of divine powers, are able to penetrate, and you will have some notion of the ecstatic joys of which Cataneo and Capraja were speaking; both poets, each for himself alone. Only, in matters of the intellect, as soon as a man can rise above the sphere where plastic art is produced by a process of imitation, and enter into that transcendental sphere of abstractions where everything is understood as an elementary principle, and seen in the omnipotence of results, that man is no longer intelligible to ordinary minds."

"You have thus explained my love for Massimilla," said Emilio. "There is in me, my friend, a force which awakes under the fire of her look, at her lightest touch, and wafts me to a world of light where effects are produced of which I dare not speak. It has seemed to me often that the delicate tissue of her skin has stamped flowers on mine as her hand lies on my hand. Her words play on those inner keys in me, of which you spoke. Desire excites my brain, stirring that invisible world, instead of exciting my passive flesh; the air seems red and sparkling, unknown perfumes of indescribable strength relax my sinews, roses wreathe my temples, and I feel as though my blood were escaping through opened arteries, so complete is my inanition."

"That is the effect on me of smoking opium," replied Vendramin.

"Then do you wish to die?" cried Emilio, in alarm.

"With Venice!" said Vendramin, waving his hand in the direction of San Marco. "Can you see a single pinnacle or spire that stands straight? Do you not perceive that the sea is claiming its prey?"

The Prince bent his head; he dared no more speak to his friend of love.

To know what a free country means, you must have traveled in a conquered land.

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When they reached the Palazzo Vendramin, they saw a gondola moored at the water-gate. The Prince put his arm round Vendramin and clasped him affectionately, saying:

"Good-night to you, my dear fellow!"

"What! a woman? for me, whose only love is Venice?" exclaimed Marco.

At this instant the gondolier, who was leaning against a column, recognizing the man he was to look out for, murmured in Emilio's ear:

"The Duchess, monseigneur."

Emilio sprang into the gondola, where he was seized in a pair of soft arms—an embrace of iron—and dragged down on to the cushions, where he felt the heaving bosom of an ardent woman. And then he was no more Emilio, but Clarina's lover; for his ideas and feelings were so bewildering that he yielded as if stupefied by her first kiss.

"Forgive this trick, my beloved," said the Sicilian. "I shall die if you do not come with me."

And the gondola flew over the secret water.

At half-past seven on the following evening, the spectators were again in their places in the theatre, excepting that those in the pit always took their chances of where they might sit. Old Capraja was in Cataneo's box.

Before the overture the Duke paid a call on the Duchess; he made a point of standing behind her and leaving the front seat to Emilio next the Duchess. He made a few trivial remarks, without sarcasm or bitterness, and with as polite a manner as if he were visiting a stranger.

But in spite of his efforts to seem amiable and natural, the Prince could not control his expression, which was deeply anxious. Bystanders would have ascribed such a change in his usually placid features to jealousy. The Duchess no doubt shared Emilio's feelings; she looked gloomy and was evidently depressed. The Duke, uncomfortable enough be-

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tween two sulky people, took advantage of the French doctor's entrance to slip away.

"Monsieur," said Cataneo to his physician before dropping the curtain over the entrance to the box, "you will hear to-night a grand musical poem, not easy of comprehension at a first hearing. But in leaving you with the Duchess I know that you can have no more competent interpreter, for she is my pupil."

The doctor, like the Duke, was struck by the expression stamped on the faces of the lovers, a look of pining despair.

"Then does an Italian opera need a guide to it?" he asked Massimilla, with a smile.

Recalled by this question to her duties as mistress of the box, the Duchess tried to chase away the clouds that darkened her brow, and replied, with eager haste, to open a conversation in which she might vent her irritation:—

"This is not so much an opera, monsieur," said she, "as an oratorio—a work which is in fact not unlike a most magnificent edifice, and I shall with pleasure be your guide. Believe me, it will not be too much to give all your mind to our great Rossini, for you need to be at once a poet and a musician to appreciate the whole bearing of such a work.

"You belong to a race whose language and genius are too practical for it to enter into music without an effort; but France is too intellectual not to learn to love it and cultivate it, and to succeed in that as in everything else. Also, it must be acknowledged that music, as created by Lulli, Rameau, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Cimarosa, Paisiello, and Rossini, and as it will be carried on by the great geniuses of the future, is a new art, unknown to former generations; they had indeed no such variety of instruments as we have now, and were unaware of the harmonies on which the flowers of melody now blossom as on some rich soil.

"So novel an art demands study in the public, study of a kind that may develop the feelings to which music appeals. That sentiment hardly exists as yet among you—a nation given up to philosophical theories, to analysis and

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discussion, and always torn by civil disturbances. Modern music demands perfect peace; it is the language of loving and sentimental souls, inclined to lofty emotional aspiration.

"That language, a thousand times fuller than the language of words, is to speech what the thought is to its utterance; it arouses sensations and ideas in their primitive form, in that part of us where sensations and ideas have their birth, but leaves them as they are in each of us. That power over our inmost being is one of the grandest facts in music. All other arts present to the mind a definite creation; those of music are indefinite—infinite. We are compelled to accept the ideas of the poet, the painter's picture, the sculptor's statue; but music each one can interpret at the will of his sorrow or his gladness, his hope or his despair. While other arts restrict our mind by fixing it on a predestined object, music frees it to roam over all nature which it alone has the power of expressing. You shall hear how I interpret Rossini's *Mosè*."

She leaned across to the Frenchman to speak to him, without being overheard.

"Moses is the liberator of an enslaved race!" said she. "Remember that, and you will see with what religious hope the whole house will listen to the prayer of the rescued Hebrews, with what a thunder of applause it will respond!"

As the leader raised his bow, Emilio flung himself into a back seat. The Duchess pointed out the place he had left, for the physician to take it. But the Frenchman was far more curious to know what had gone wrong between the lovers than to enter the halls of music built up by the man whom all Italy was applauding—for it was the day of Rossini's triumph in his own country. He was watching the Duchess, and she was talking with a feverish excitement. She reminded him of the Niobe he had admired at Florence: the same dignity in woe, the same physical control; and yet her soul shone through, in the warm flush in her cheeks; and her eyes, where anxiety was disguised under a flash of pride,

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seemed to scorch the tears away by their fire. Her suppressed grief seemed calmer when she looked at Emilio, who never took his eyes off her; it was easy to see that she was trying to mollify some fierce despair. The state of her feelings gave a certain loftiness to her mind.

Like most women when under the stress of some unusual agitation, she overstepped her ordinary limitations and assumed something of the Pythoness, though still remaining calm and beautiful; for it was the form of her thoughts that was wrung with desperation, not the features of her face. And perhaps she wanted to shine with all her wit to lend some charm to life and detain her lover from death.

When the orchestra had given out the three chords in C major, placed at the opening by the composer to announce that the overture will be sung—for the real overture is the great movement beginning with this stern attack, and ending only when light appears at the command of Moses—the Duchess could not control a little spasmodic start, that showed how entirely the music was in accordance with her concealed distress.

"Those three chords freeze the blood," said she. "They announce trouble. Listen attentively to this introduction; the terrible lament of a nation stricken by the hand of God. What wailing! The King, the Queen, their first-born son, all the dignitaries of the kingdom are sighing; they are wounded in their pride, in their conquests; checked in their avarice. Dear Rossini! you have done well to throw this bone to gnaw to the *Tedeschi,* who declared we had no harmony, no science!

"Now you will hear the ominous melody the maestro has engrafted on to this profound harmonic composition, worthy to compare with the most elaborate structures of the Germans, but never fatiguing or tiresome.

"You French, who carried through such a bloodthirsty revolution, who crushed your aristocracy under the paw of the lion mob, on the day when this oratorio is performed in your capital, you will understand this glorious dirge of the

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victims on whom God is avenging his chosen people. None but an Italian could have written this pregnant and inexhaustible theme—truly Dantesque. Do you think that it is nothing to have such a dream of vengeance, even for a moment? Händel, Sebastian Bach, all you old German masters, nay, even you, great Beethoven, on your knees! Here is the queen of arts, Italy triumphant!"

The Duchess had spoken while the curtain was being raised. And now the physician heard the sublime symphony with which the composer introduces the great Biblical drama. It is to express the sufferings of a whole nation. Suffering is uniform in its expression, especially physical suffering. Thus, having instinctively felt, like all men of genius, that here there must be no variety of idea, the musician, having hit on his leading phrase, has worked it out in various keys, grouping the masses and the dramatis personæ to take up the theme through modulations and cadences of admirable structure. In such simplicity is power.

"The effect of this strain, depicting the sensations of night and cold in a people accustomed to live in the bright rays of the sun, and sung by the people and their princes, is most impressive. There is something relentless in that slow phrase of music; it is cold and sinister, like an iron bar wielded by some celestial executioner, and dropping in regular rhythm on the limbs of all his victims. As we hear it passing from C minor into G minor, returning to C and again to the dominant G, starting afresh and *fortissimo* on the tonic B flat, drifting into F major and back to C minor, and in each key in turn more ominously terrible, chill, and dark, we are compelled at last to enter into the impression intended by the composer."

The Frenchman was, in fact, deeply moved when all this united sorrow exploded in the cry:

"O Nume d'Israel,
Se brami in libertà
Il popol tuo fedel,
Di lui di noi pietà!"

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(O God of Israel, if thou wouldst see thy faithful people free, have mercy on them, and on us.)

"Never was a grander synthesis composed of natural effects or a more perfect idealization of nature. In a great national disaster, each one for a long time bewails himself alone; then, from out of the mass, rises up, here and there, a more emphatic and vehement cry of anguish; finally, when the misery has fallen on all, it bursts forth like a tempest.

"As soon as they all recognize a common grievance, the dull murmurs of the people become cries of impatience. Rossini has proceeded on this hypothesis. After the outcry in C major, Pharaoh sings his grand recitative: *Mano ultrice di un Dio* (Avenging hand of God), after which the original subject is repeated with more vehement expression. All Egypt appeals to Moses for help."

The Duchess had taken advantage of the pause for the entrance of Moses and Aaron to give this interpretation of that fine introduction.

"Let them weep!" she added passionately. "They have done much ill. Expiate your sins, Egyptians, expiate the crimes of your maddened Court! With what amazing skill has this great painter made use of all the gloomy tones of music, of all that is saddest on the musical palette! What creepy darkness! what a mist! Is not your very spirit in mourning? Are you not convinced of the reality of the blackness that lies over the land? Do you not feel that Nature is wrapped in the deepest shades? There are no palm-trees, no Egyptian palaces, no landscape. And what a healing to your soul will the deeply religious strain be of the heaven-sent Healer who will stay this cruel plague! How skilfully is everything wrought up to end in that glorious invocation of Moses to God.

"By a learned elaboration, which Capraja could explain to you, this appeal to heaven is accompanied by brass instruments only; it is that which gives it such a solemn, religious cast. And not merely is the artifice fine in its place; note how fertile in resource is genius. Rossini has derived fresh

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beauty from the difficulty he himself created. He has the strings in reserve to express daylight when it succeeds to the darkness, and thus produces one of the greatest effects ever achieved in music.

"Till this inimitable genius showed the way never was such a result obtained with mere *recitative*. We have not, so far, had an air or a duet. The poet has relied on the strength of the idea, on the vividness of his imagery, and the realism of the declamatory passages. This scene of despair, this darkness that may be felt, these cries of anguish, —the whole musical picture is as fine as your great Poussin's *Deluge*."

Moses waved his staff, and it was light.

"Here, monsieur, does not the music vie with the sun, whose splendor it has borrowed, with nature, whose phenomena it expresses in every detail?" the Duchess went on, in an undertone. "Art here reaches its climax; no musician can get beyond this. Do not you hear Egypt waking up after its long torpor? Joy comes in with the day. In what composition, ancient or modern, will you find so grand a passage? The greatest gladness in contrast to the deepest woe! What exclamations! What gleeful notes! The oppressed spirit breathes again. What delirium in the *tremolo* of the orchestra! What a noble *tutti!* This is the rejoicing of a delivered nation. Are you not thrilled with joy?"

The physician, startled by the contrast, was, in fact, clapping his hands, carried away by admiration for one of the finest compositions of modern music.

"Bravo la Doni!" said Vendramin, who had heard the Duchess.

"Now the introduction is ended," said she. "You have gone through a great sensation," she added, turning to the Frenchman. "Your heart is beating; in the depths of your imagination you have a splendid sunrise, flooding with light a whole country that before was cold and dark. Now, would you know the means by which the musician has worked, so as to admire him to-morrow for the secrets of his craft after

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enjoying the results to-night? What do you suppose produces this effect of daylight—so sudden, so complicated, and so complete? It consists of a simple chord of C, constantly reiterated, varied only by the chord of 4-6. This reveals the magic of his touch. To show you the glory of light he has worked by the same means that he used to represent darkness and sorrow.

"This dawn in imagery is, in fact, absolutely the same as the natural dawn; for light is one and the same thing everywhere, always alike in itself, the effects varying only with the objects it falls on. Is it not so? Well, the musician has taken for the fundamental basis of his music, for its sole *motif*, a simple chord in C. The sun first sheds its light on the mountain-tops and then in the valleys. In the same way the chord is first heard on the treble string of the violins with boreal mildness; it spreads through the orchestra, it awakes the instruments one by one, and flows among them. Just as light glides from one thing to the next, giving them color, the music moves on, calling out each rill of harmony till all flow together in the *tutti*.

"The violins, silent until now, give the signal with their tender *tremolo*, softly *agitato* like the first rays of morning. That light, cheerful movement, which caresses the soul, is cleverly supported by chords in the bass, and by a vague *fanfare* on the trumpets, restricted to their lowest notes, so as to give a vivid idea of the last cool shadows that linger in the valleys while the first warm rays touch the heights. Then all the wind is gradually added to strengthen the general harmony. The voices come in with sighs of delight and surprise. At last the brass breaks out, the trumpets sound. Light, the source of all harmony, inundates all nature; every musical resource is produced with a turbulence, a splendor, to compare with that of the Eastern sun. Even the triangle, with its reiterated C, reminds us by its shrill accent and playful rhythm of the song of early birds.

"Thus the same key, freshly treated by the master's hand, expresses the joy of all nature, while it soothes the grief it uttered before.

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"There is the hall-mark of the great genius: Unity. It is the same, but different. In one and the same phrase we find a thousand various feelings of woe, the misery of a nation. In one and the same chord we have all the various incidents of awakening nature, every expression of the nation's joy. These two tremendous passages are soldered into one by the prayer to an ever-living God, author of all things, of that woe and that gladness alike. Now is not that introduction by itself a grand poem?"

"It is, indeed," said the Frenchman.

"Next comes a quintette such as Rossini can give us. If he was ever justified in giving vent to that flowery, voluptuous grace for which Italian music is blamed, is it not in this charming movement in which each person expresses joy? The enslaved people are delivered, and yet a passion in peril is fain to moan. Pharaoh's son loves a Hebrew woman, and she must leave him. What gives its ravishing charm to this quintette is the return to the homelier feelings of life after the grandiose picture of two stupendous and national emotions:—general misery, general joy, expressed with the magic force stamped on them by divine vengeance and with the miraculous atmosphere of the Bible narrative. Now, was not I right?" added Massimilla, as the noble *stretto* came to a close.

"Voci di giubilo,
D' in'orno eccheggino,
Di pace l' Iride
Per noi spunto."

(Cries of joy sound about us. The rainbow of peace dawns upon us.)

"How ingeniously the composer has constructed this passage!" she went on, after waiting for a reply. "He begins with a solo on the horn, of divine sweetness, supported by *arpeggios* on the harps; for the first voices to be heard in this grand concerted piece are those of Moses and Aaron returning thanks to the true God. Their strain, soft and

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solemn, reverts to the sublime ideas of the invocation, and mingles, nevertheless, with the joy of the heathen people. This transition combines the heavenly and the earthly in a way which genius alone could invent, giving the *andante* of this quintette a glow of color that I can only compare to the light thrown by Titian on his Divine Persons. Did you observe the exquisite interweaving of the voices? the clever entrances by which the composer has grouped them round the main idea given out by the orchestra? the learned progressions that prepare us for the festal *allegro?* Did you not get a glimpse, as it were, of dancing groups, the dizzy round of a whole nation escaped from danger? And when the clarionet gives the signal for the *stretto,—'Voci di giubilo,'*—so brilliant and gay, was not your soul filled with the sacred pyrrhic joy of which David speaks in the Psalms, ascribing it to the hills?"

"Yes, it would make a delightful dance tune," said the doctor.

"French! French! always French!" exclaimed the Duchess, checked in her exultant mood by this sharp thrust. "Yes; you would be capable of taking that wonderful burst of noble and dainty rejoicing and turning it into a rigadoon. Sublime poetry finds no mercy in your eyes. The highest genius,—saints, kings, disasters,—all that is most sacred must pass under the rods of caricature. And the vulgarizing of great music by turning it into a dance tune is to caricature it. With you, wit kills soul, as argument kills reason."

They all sat in silence through the *recitative* of Osiride and Membrea, who plot to annul the order given by Pharaoh for the departure of the Hebrews.

"Have I vexed you?" said the physician to the Duchess. I should be in despair. Your words are like a magic wand. They unlock the pigeon-holes of my brain, and let out new ideas, vivified by this sublime music."

"No," replied she, "you have praised our great composer after your own fashion. Rossini will be a success with you,

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for the sake of his witty and sensual gifts. Let us hope that he may find some noble souls, in love with the ideal—which must exist in your fruitful land,—to appreciate the sublimity, the loftiness, of such music. Ah, now we have the famous duet, between Elcia and Osiride!" she exclaimed, and she went on, taking advantage of the triple salvo of applause which hailed la Tinti, as she made her first appearance on the stage.

"If la Tinti has fully understood the part of Elcia, you will hear the frenzied song of a woman torn by her love for her people, and her passion for one of their oppressors, while Osiride, full of mad adoration for his beautiful vassal, tries to detain her. The opera is built up as much on that grand idea as on that of Pharaoh's resistance to the power of God and of liberty; you must enter into it thoroughly or you will not understand this stupendous work.

"Notwithstanding the disfavor you show to the dramas invented by our *libretto* writers, you must allow me to point out the skill with which this one is constructed. The antithesis required in every fine work, and eminently favorable to music, is well worked out. What can be finer than a whole nation demanding liberty, held in bondage by bad faith, upheld by God, and piling marvel on marvel to gain freedom? What more dramatic than the Prince's love for a Hebrew woman, almost justifying treason to the oppressor's power?

"And this is what is expressed in this bold and stupendous musical poem; Rossini has stamped each nation with its fantastic individuality, for we have attributed to them a certain historic grandeur to which every imagination subscribes. The songs of the Hebrews, and their trust in God, are perpetually contrasted with Pharaoh's shrieks of rage and vain efforts, represented with a strong hand.

"At this moment Osiride, thinking only of love, hopes to detain his mistress by the memories of their joys as lovers; he wants to conquer the attractions of her feeling for her people. Here, then, you will find delicious languor, the

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glowing sweetness, the voluptuous suggestions of Oriental love, in the air *'Ah! se puoi cosi lasciarmi,'* sung by Osiride, and in Elcia's reply, *'Ma perchè cosi straziarmi?'* No; two hearts in such melodious unison could never part," she went on, looking at the Prince.

"But the lovers are suddenly interrupted by the exultant voice of the Hebrew people in the distance, which recalls Elcia. What a delightful and inspiriting *allegro* is the theme of this march, as the Israelites set out for the desert! No one but Rossini can make wind instruments and trumpets say so much. And is not the art which can express in two phrases all that is meant by the 'native land' certainly nearer to heaven than the others? This clarion-call always moves me so deeply that I cannot find words to tell you how cruel it is to an enslaved people to see those who are free march away!"

The Duchess' eyes filled with tears as she listened to the grand movement, which in fact crowns the opera.

"Dov' è mai quel core amante," she murmured in Italian, as la Tinti began the delightful *aria* of the *stretto* in which she implores pity for her grief. "But what is the matter? The pit are dissatisfied——"

"Genovese is braying like a stag," replied the Prince.

In point of fact, this first duet with la Tinti was spoilt by Genovese's utter breakdown. His excellent method, recalling that of Crescentini and Veluti, seemed to desert him completely. A *sostenuto* in the wrong place, an embellishment carried to excess, spoilt the effect; or again a loud climax with no due *crescendo,* an outburst of sound like water tumbling through a suddenly opened sluice, showed complete and wilful neglect of the laws of good taste.

The pit was in the greatest excitement. The Venetian public believed there was a deliberate plot between Genovese and his friends. La Tinti was recalled and applauded with frenzy, while Genovese had a hint or two warning him of the hostile feeling of the audience. During this scene, highly amusing to a Frenchman, while la Tinti was re-

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called eleven times to receive alone the frantic acclamations of the house,—Genovese, who was all but hissed, not daring to offer her his hand,—the doctor made a remark to the Duchess as to the *stretto* of the duet.

"In this place," said he, "Rossini ought to have expressed the deepest grief, and I find on the contrary an airy movement, a tone of ill-timed cheerfulness."

"You are right," said she. "This mistake is the result of a tyrannous custom which composers are expected to obey. He was thinking more of his prima donna than of Elcia when he wrote that *stretto*. But this evening, even if la Tinti had been more brilliant than ever, I could throw myself so completely into the situation, that the passage, lively as it is, is to me full of sadness."

The physician looked attentively from the Prince to the Duchess, but could not guess the reason that held them apart, and that made this duet seem to them so heartrending.

"Now comes a magnificent thing, the scheming of Pharaoh against the Hebrews. The great *aria 'A rispettarmi apprenda'* (Learn to respect me) is a triumph for Carthagenova, who will express superbly the offended pride and the duplicity of a sovereign. The Throne will speak. He will withdraw the concessions that have been made, he arms himself in wrath. Pharaoh rises to his feet to clutch the prey that is escaping.

"Rossini never wrote anything grander in style, or stamped with more living and irresistible energy. It is a consummate work, supported by an accompaniment of marvelous orchestration, as indeed is every portion of this opera. The vigor of youth illumines the smallest details."

The whole house applauded this noble movement, which was admirably rendered by the singer, and thoroughly appreciated by the Venetians.

"In the *finale*," said the Duchess, "you hear a repetition of the march, expressive of the joy of deliverance and of faith in God, who allows His people to rush off gleefully to

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wander in the Desert! What lungs but would be refreshed by the aspirations of a whole nation freed from slavery.

"Oh, beloved and living melodies! Glory to the great genius who has known how to give utterance to such feelings! There is something essentially warlike in that march, proclaiming that the God of armies is on the side of these people. How full of feeling are these strains of thanksgiving! The imagery of the Bible rises up in our mind; this glorious musical *scena* enables us to realize one of the grandest dramas of that ancient and solemn world. The religious form given to some of the voice parts, and the way in which they come in, one by one, to group with the others, express all we have ever imagined of the sacred marvels of that early age of humanity.

"And yet this fine concerted piece is no more than a development of the theme of the march into all its musical outcome. That theme is the inspiring element alike for the orchestra and the voices, for the air, and for the brilliant instrumentation that supports it.

"Elcia now comes to join the crowd; and to give shade to the rejoicing spirit of this number, Rossini has made her utter her regrets. Listen to her *duettino* with Amenofi. Did blighted love ever express itself in lovelier song? It is full of the grace of a *notturno,* of the secret grief of hopeless love. How sad, how sad! The Desert will indeed be a desert to her!

"After this comes the fierce conflict of the Egyptians and the Hebrews. All their joy is spoiled, their march stopped by the arrival of the Egyptians. Pharaoh's edict is proclaimed in a musical phrase, hollow and dread, which is the leading *motif* of the *finale;* we could fancy that we hear the tramp of the great Egyptian army, surrounding the sacred phalanx of the true God, curling round it, like a long African serpent enveloping its prey. But how beautiful is the lament of the duped and disappointed Hebrews! Though, in truth, it is more Italian than Hebrew. What a superb passage introduces Pharaoh's arrival, when his

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presence brings the two leaders face to face, and all the moving passions of the drama. The conflict of sentiments in that sublime *ottetto,* where the wrath of Moses meets that of the two Pharaohs, is admirable. What a medley of voices and of unchained furies!

"No grander subject was ever wrought out by a composer. The famous *finale* of *Don Giovanni,* after all, only shows us a libertine at odds with his victims, who invoke the vengeance of Heaven; while here earth and its dominions try to defeat God. Two nations are here face to face. And Rossini, having every means at his command, has made wonderful use of them. He has succeeded in expressing the turmoil of a tremendous storm as a background to the most terrible imprecations, without making it ridiculous. He has achieved it by the use of chords repeated in triple time—a monotonous rhythm of gloomy musical emphasis—and so persistent as to be quite overpowering. The horror of the Egyptians at the torrent of fire, the cries of vengeance from the Hebrews, needed a delicate balance of masses; so note how he has made the development of the orchestral parts follow that of the chorus. The *allegro assai* in C minor is terrible in the midst of that deluge of fire.

"Confess now," said Massimilla, at the moment when Moses, lifting his rod, brings down the rain of fire, and when the composer puts forth all his powers in the orchestra and on the stage, "that no music ever more perfectly expressed the idea of distress and confusion."

"They have spread to the pit," remarked the Frenchman.

"What is it now? The pit is certainly in great excitement," said the Duchess.

In the *finale,* Genovese, his eyes fixed on la Tinti, had launched into such preposterous flourishes, that the pit, indignant at this interference with their enjoyment, were at a height of uproar. Nothing could be more exasperating to Italian ears than this contrast of good and bad singing. The manager went so far as to appear on the stage, to say that in reply to his remarks to his leading singer, Signor

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Genovese had replied that he knew not how or by what offence he had lost the countenance of the public, at the very moment when he was endeavoring to achieve perfection in his art.

"Let him be as bad as he was yesterday—that was good enough for us!" roared Capraja, in a rage.

This suggestion put the house into a good humor again.

Contrary to Italian custom, the ballet was not much attended to. In every box the only subject of conversation was Genovese's strange behavior, and the luckless manager's speech. Those who were admitted behind the scenes went off at once to inquire into the mystery of this performance, and it was presently rumored that la Tinti had treated her colleague Genovese to a dreadful scene, in which she had accused the tenor of being jealous of her success, of having hindered it by his ridiculous behavior, and even of trying to spoil her performance by acting passionate devotion. The lady was shedding bitter tears over this catastrophe. She had been hoping, she said, to charm her lover, who was somewhere in the house, though she had failed to discover him.

Without knowing the peaceful course of daily life in Venice at the present day, so devoid of incident that a slight altercation between two lovers, or the transient huskiness of a singer's voice becomes a subject of discussion, regarded of as much importance as politics in England, it is impossible to conceive of the excitement in the theatre and at the Café Florian. La Tinti was in love; la Tinti had been hindered in her performance; Genovese was mad or purposely malignant, inspired by the artist's jealousy so familiar to Italians! What a mine of matter for eager discussion!

The whole pit was talking as men talk at the Bourse, and the result was such a clamor as could not fail to amaze a Frenchman accustomed to the quiet of the Paris theatres. The boxes were in a ferment like the stir of swarming bees.

One man alone remained passive in the turmoil. Emilio Memmi, with his back to the stage and his eyes fixed on

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Massimilla with a melancholy expression, seemed to live in her gaze; he had not once looked round at the prima donna.

"I need not ask you, *caro carino,* what was the result of my negotiation," said Vendramin to Emilio. "Your pure and pious Massimilla has been supremely kind—in short, she has been la Tinti?"

The Prince's reply was a shake of his head, full of the deepest melancholy.

"Your love has not descended from the ethereal spaces where you soar," said Vendramin, excited by opium. "It is not yet materialized. This morning, as every day for six months—you felt flowers opening their scented cups under the dome of your skull that had expanded to vast proportions. All your blood moved to your swelling heart that rose to choke your throat. There, in there,"—and he laid his hand on Emilio's breast,—"you felt rapturous emotions. Massimilla's voice fell on your soul in waves of light; her touch released a thousand imprisoned joys which emerged from the convolutions of your brain to gather about you in clouds, to waft your etherealized body through the blue air in a purple glow far above the snowy heights, to where the pure love of angels dwells. The smile, the kisses of her lips, wrapped you in a poisoned robe which burnt up the last vestiges of your earthly nature. Her eyes were twin stars that turned you into shadowless light. You knelt together on the palm-branches of heaven, waiting for the gates of Paradise to be opened; but they turned heavily on their hinges, and in your impatience you struck at them, but could not reach them. Your hand touched nothing but clouds more nimble than your desires. Your radiant companion, crowned with white roses like a bride of Heaven, wept at your anguish. Perhaps she was murmuring melodious litanies to the Virgin, while the demoniacal cravings of the flesh were haunting you with their shameless clamor, and you disdained the divine fruits of that ecstasy in which I live, though shortening my life."

"Your exaltation, my dear Vendramin," replied Emilio,

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calmly, "is still beneath reality. Who can describe that purely physical exhaustion in which we are left by the abuse of a dream of pleasure, leaving the soul still eternally craving, and the spirit in clear possession of its faculties?

"But I am weary of this torment, which is that of Tantalus. This is my last night on earth. After one final effort, our Mother shall have her child again—the Adriatic will silence my last sigh——"

"Are you idiotic?" cried Vendramin. "No; you are mad; for madness, the crisis we despise, is the memory of an antecedent condition acting on our present state of being. The genius of my dreams has taught me that, and much else! You want to make one of the Duchess and la Tinti; nay, dear Emilio, take them separately; it will be far wiser. Raphael alone ever united form and idea. You want to be the Raphael of love; but chance cannot be commanded. Raphael was a 'fluke' of God's creation, for He foreordained that form and idea should be antagonistic; otherwise nothing could live. When the first cause is more potent than the outcome, nothing comes of it. We must live either on earth or in the skies. Remain in the skies; it is always too soon to come down to earth."

"I will take the Duchess home," said the Prince, "and make a last attempt—afterwards?"

"Afterwards," cried Vendramin, anxiously, "promise to call for me at Florian's."

"I will."

This dialogue, in modern Greek, with which Vendramin and Emilio were familiar, as many Venetians are, was unintelligible to the Duchess and to the Frenchman. Although he was quite outside the little circle that held the Duchess, Emilio and Vendramin together—for these three understood each other by means of Italian glances, by turns arch and keen, or veiled and sidelong—the physician at last discerned part of the truth. An earnest entreaty from the Duchess had prompted Vendramin's suggestion to Emilio, for Massimilla had begun to suspect the misery endured by

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her lover in that cold empyrean where he was wandering, though she had no suspicions of la Tinti.

"These two young men are mad!" said the doctor.

"As to the Prince," said the Duchess, "trust me to cure him. As to Vendramin, if he cannot understand this sublime music, he is perhaps incurable."

"If you would but tell me the cause of their madness, I could cure them," said the Frenchman.

"And since when have great physicians ceased to read men's minds?" said she, jestingly.

The ballet was long since ended; the second act of *Mosè* was beginning. The pit was perfectly attentive. A rumor had got abroad that Duke Cataneo had lectured Genovese, representing to him what injury he was doing to Clarina, the *diva* of the day. The second act would certainly be magnificent.

"The Egyptian Prince and his father are on the stage," said the Duchess. "They have yielded once more, though insulting the Hebrews, but they are trembling with rage. The father congratulates himself on his son's approaching marriage, and the son is in despair at this fresh obstacle, though it only increases his love, to which everything is opposed. Genovese and Carthagenova are singing admirably. As you see, the tenor is making his peace with the house. How well he brings out the beauty of the music! The phrase given out by the son on the tonic, and repeated by the father on the dominant, is all in character with the simple, serious scheme which prevails throughout the score; the sobriety of it makes the endless variety of the music all the more wonderful. All Egypt is there.

"I do not believe that there is in modern music a composition more perfectly noble. The solemn and majestic paternity of a king is fully expressed in that magnificent theme, in harmony with the grand style that stamps the opera throughout. The idea of a Pharaoh's son pouring out his sorrows on his father's bosom could surely not be more admirably represented than in this grand imagery. Do you

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not yourself feel a sense of the splendor we are wont to attribute to that monarch of antiquity?"

"It is indeed sublime music," said the Frenchman.

"The air *Pace mia smarrita,* which the Queen will now sing, is one of those *bravura* songs which every composer is compelled to introduce, though they mar the general scheme of the work; but an opera would as often as not never see the light, if the prima donna's vanity were not duly flattered. Still, this musical 'sop' is so fine in itself that it is performed as written, on every stage; it is so brilliant that the leading lady does not substitute her favorite show piece, as is very commonly done in operas.

"And now comes the most striking movement in the score: the duet between Osiride and Elcia in the subterranean chamber where he has hidden her to keep her from the departing Israelites, and to fly with her himself from Egypt. The lovers are then intruded on by Aaron, who has been to warn Amalthea, and we get the grandest of all quartettes: *Mi manca la voce, mi sento morire.* This is one of those masterpieces that will survive in spite of time, that destroyer of fashion in music, for it speaks the language of the soul which can never change. Mozart holds his own by the famous *finale* to *Don Giovanni;* Marcello, by his psalm, *Cœli enarrant gloriam Dei;* Cimarosa, by the air *Pria che spunti;* Beethoven by his C minor symphony; Pergolesi, by his *Stabat Mater;* Rossini will live by *Mi manca la voce.* What is most to be admired in Rossini is his command of variety of form; to produce the effect here required, he has had recourse to the old structure of the canon in unison, to bring the voices in, and merge them in the same melody. As the form of these sublime melodies was new, he set them in an old frame; and to give it the more relief he has silenced the orchestra, accompanying the voices with the harps alone. It is impossible to show greater ingenuity of detail, or to produce a grander general effect.—Dear me! again an outbreak!" said the Duchess.

Genovese, who had sung his duet with Carthagenova so

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well, was caricaturing himself now that la Tinti was on the stage. From a great singer he sank to the level of the most worthless chorus singer.

The most formidable uproar arose that had ever echoed to the roof of the *Fenice*. The commotion only yielded to Clarina, and she, furious at the difficulties raised by Genovese's obstinacy, sang *Mi manca la voce* as it will never be sung again. The enthusiasm was tremendous; the audience forgot their indignation and rage in pleasure that was really acute.

"She floods my soul with purple glow!" said Capraja, waving his hand in benediction at la *Diva* Tinti.

"Heaven send all its blessings on your head!" cried a gondolier.

"Pharaoh will now revoke his commands," said the Duchess, while the commotion in the pit was calming down. "Moses will overwhelm him, even on his throne, by declaring the death of every first-born son in Egypt, singing that strain of vengeance which augurs thunders from heaven, while above it the Hebrew clarions ring out. But you must clearly understand that this air is by Pacini; Carthagenova introduces it instead of that by Rossini. This air, *Paventa,* will no doubt hold its place in the score; it gives a bass too good an opportunity for displaying the quality of his voice, and expression here will carry the day rather than science. However, the air is full of magnificent menace, and it is possible that we may not be long allowed to hear it."

A thunder of clapping and *bravos* hailed the song, followed by deep and cautious silence; nothing could be more significant or more thoroughly Venetian than the outbreak and its sudden suppression.

"I need say nothing of the coronation march announcing the enthronement of Osiride, intended by the King as a challenge to Moses; to hear it is enough. Their famous Beethoven has written nothing grander. And this march, full of earthly pomp, contrasts finely with the march of the Israelites. Compare them, and you will see that the music is full of purpose.

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"Elcia declares her love in the presence of the two Hebrew leaders, and then renounces it in the fine *aria, Porge la destra amata.* (Place your beloved hand.) Ah! What anguish! Only look at the house!"

The pit was shouting *bravo,* when Genovese left the stage.

"Now, free from her deplorable lover, we shall hear Tinti sing, *O desolata Elcia*—the tremendous *cavatina* expressive of love disapproved by God."

"Where art thou, Rossini?" cried Cataneo. "If he could but hear the music created by his genius so magnificently performed," he went on. "Is not Clarina worthy of him?" he asked Capraja. "To give life to those notes by such gusts of flame, starting from the lungs and feeding in the air on some unknown matter which our ears inhale, and which bears us heavenwards in a rapture of love, she must be divine!"

"She is like the gorgeous Indian plant, which deserting the earth absorbs invisible nourishment from the atmosphere, and sheds from its spiral white blossom such fragrant vapors as fill the brain with dreams," replied Capraja.

On being recalled, la Tinti appeared alone. She was received with a storm of applause; a thousand kisses were blown to her from finger-tips; she was pelted with roses, and a wreath was made of the flowers snatched from the ladies' caps, almost all sent out from Paris.

The *cavatina* was encored.

"How eagerly Capraja, with his passion for embellishments, must have looked forward to this air, which derives all its value from execution," remarked Massimilla. "Here Rossini has, so to speak, given the reins over to the singer's fancy. Her *cadenzas* and her feeling are everything. With a poor voice or inferior execution, it would be nothing—the throat is responsible for the effects of this *aria.*

"The singer has to express the most intense anguish,—that of a woman who sees her lover dying before her very eyes. La Tinti makes the house ring with her highest notes; and Rossini, to leave pure singing free to do its utmost, has

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written it in the simplest, clearest style. Then, as a crowning effort, he has composed those heartrending musical cries: *Tormenti! Affanni! Smanie!* What grief, what anguish, in those runs. And la Tinti, you see, has quite carried the house off its feet."

The Frenchman, bewildered by this adoring admiration throughout a vast theatre for the source of its delight, here had a glimpse of genuine Italian nature. But neither the Duchess nor the two young men paid any attention to the ovation. Clarina began again.

The Duchess feared that she was seeing her Emilio for the last time. As to the Prince: in the presence of the Duchess, the sovereign divinity who lifted him to the skies, he had forgotten where he was, he no longer heard the voice of the woman who had initiated him into the mysteries of earthly pleasure, for deep dejection made his ears tingle with a chorus of plaintive voices, half-drowned in a rushing noise as of pouring rain.

Vendramin saw himself in an ancient Venetian costume, looking on at the ceremony of the *Bucentaur*. The Frenchman, who plainly discerned that some strange and painful mystery stood between the Prince and the Duchess, was racking his brain with shrewd conjecture to discover what it could be.

The scene had changed. In front of a fine picture, representing the Desert and the Red Sea, the Egyptians and Hebrews marched and countermarched without any effect on the feelings of the four persons in the Duchess' box. But when the first chords on the harps preluded the hymn of the delivered Israelites, the Prince and Vendramin rose and stood leaning against the opposite sides of the box, and the Duchess, resting her elbow on the velvet ledge, supported her head on her left hand.

The Frenchman, understanding from this little stir, how important this justly famous chorus was in the opinion of the house, listened with devout attention.

The audience, with one accord, shouted for its repetition.

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"I feel as if I were celebrating the liberation of Italy," thought a Milanese.

"Such music lifts up bowed heads, and revives hope in the most torpid," said a man from the Romagna.

"In this scene," said Massimilla, whose emotion was evident, "science is set aside. Inspiration, alone, dictated this masterpiece; it rose from the composer's soul like a cry of love! As to the accompaniment, it consists of the harps; the orchestra appears only at the last repetition of that heavenly strain. Rossini can never rise higher than in this prayer; he will do as good work, no doubt, but never better: the sublime is always equal to itself; but this hymn is one of the things that will always be sublime. The only match for such a conception might be found in the psalms of the great Marcello, a noble Venetian, who was to music what Giotto was to painting. The majesty of the phrase, unfolding itself with episodes of inexhaustible melody, is comparable with the finest things ever invented by religious writers.

"How simple is the structure! Moses opens the attack in G minor, ending in a cadenza in B flat which allows the chorus to come in, *pianissimo* at first, in B flat, returning by modulations to G minor. This splendid treatment of the voices, recurring three times, ends in the last strophe with a *stretto* in G major of absolutely overpowering effect. We feel as though this hymn of a nation released from slavery, as it mounts to heaven, were met by kindred strains falling from the higher spheres. The stars respond with joy to the ecstasy of liberated mortals. The rounded fulness of the rhythm, the deliberate dignity of the gradations leading up to the outbursts of thanksgiving, and its slow return raise heavenly images in the soul. Could you not fancy that you saw heaven open, angels holding sistrums of gold, prostrate seraphs swinging their fragrant censers, and the archangels leaning on the flaming swords with which they have vanquished the heathen?

"The secret of this music and its refreshing effect on the soul is, I believe, that of a very few works of human genius;

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it carries us for the moment into the infinite; we feel it within us; we see it, in those melodies as boundless as the hymns sung round the throne of God. Rossini's genius carries us up to prodigious heights, whence we look down on a promised land, and our eyes, charmed by heavenly light, gaze into limitless space. Elcia's last strain, having almost recovered from her grief, brings a feeling of earth-born passion into this hymn of thanksgiving. This, again, is a touch of genius.

"Ay, sing!" exclaimed the Duchess, as she listened to the last stanza with the same gloomy enthusiasm as the singers threw into it. "Sing! You are free!"

The words were spoken in a voice that startled the physician. To divert Massimilla from her bitter reflections, while the excitement of recalling la Tinti was at its height, he engaged her in one of the arguments in which the French excel.

"Madame," said he, "in explaining this grand work—which I shall come to hear again to-morrow with a fuller comprehension, thanks to you, of its structure and its effect—you have frequently spoken of the color of the music, and of the ideas it depicts; now I, as an analyst, a materialist, must confess that I have always rebelled against the affectation of certain enthusiasts, who try to make us believe that music paints with tones. Would it not be the same thing if Raphael's admirer's spoke of his singing with colors?"

"In the language of musicians," replied the Duchess, "*painting* is arousing certain associations in our souls, or certain images in our brain; and these memories and images have a color of their own; they are sad or cheerful. You are battling for a word, that is all. According to Capraja, each instrument has its task, its mission, and appeals to certain ideas, just as each color is associated with certain feelings in our souls. Does a pattern in gold on a blue ground produce the same sensations in you as a red pattern on black or green? In these, as in music, there are no figures, no expression of feeling; they are purely artistic, and yet no one

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looks at them with indifference. Has not the oboe the peculiar tone that we associate with the open country, in common with most wind instruments? The brass suggests martial ideas, and rouses us to vehement or even somewhat furious feelings. The strings, for which the material is derived from the organic world, seem to appeal to the subtlest fibres of our nature; they go to the very depths of the heart. When I spoke of the gloomy hue, and the coldness of the tones in the introduction to *Mosè,* was I not fully as much justified as your critics are when they speak of the 'color' in a writer's language? Do you not acknowledge that there is a nervous style, a pallid style, a lively, and a highly-colored style? Art can paint with words, sounds, colors, lines, form; the means are many; the result is one.

"An Italian architect might give us the same sensation that is produced in us by the introduction to *Mosè,* by constructing a walk through dark, damp avenues of tall, thick trees, and bringing us out suddenly in a valley full of streams, flowers, and mills, and basking in the sunshine. In their greatest moments the arts are but the expression of the grand scenes of nature.

"I am not learned enough to enlarge on the philosophy of music; go and talk to Capraja; you will be amazed at what he can tell you. He will say that every instrument that depends on the touch or breath of man for its expression and length of note, is superior as a vehicle of expression to color, which remains fixed, or speech, which has its limits. The language of music is infinite; it includes everything; it can express all things.

"Now do you see wherein lies the pre-eminence of the work you have just heard? I can explain it in a few words. There are two kinds of music: one, petty, poor, second-rate, always the same, based on a hundred or so of phrases which every musician has at his command, a more or less agreeable form of babble which most composers live in. We listen to their strains, their would-be melodies, with more or less satisfaction, but absolutely nothing is left in our mind; by the

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end of a century they are forgotten. But the nations, from the beginning of time till our own day, have cherished as a precious treasure certain strains which epitomize their instincts and habits; I might almost say their history. Listen to one of these primitive tones,—the Gregorian chant, for instance, is, in sacred song, the inheritance of the earliest peoples,—and you will lose yourself in deep dreaming. Strange and immense conceptions will unfold within you, in spite of the extreme simplicity of these rudimentary relics. And once or twice in a century—not oftener, there arises a Homer of music, to whom God grants the gift of being ahead of his age; men who can compact melodies full of accomplished facts, pregnant with mighty poetry. Think of this; remember it. The thought, repeated by you, will prove fruitful; it is melody, not harmony, that can survive the shocks of time.

"The music of this oratorio contains a whole world of great and sacred things. A work which begins with that introduction and ends with that prayer is immortal—as immortal as the Easter hymn, *O filii et filiæ,* as the *Dies iræ* of the dead, as all the songs which in every land have outlived its splendor, its happiness, and its ruined prosperity."

The tears the Duchess wiped away as she quitted her box showed plainly that she was thinking of the Venice that is no more; and Vendramin kissed her hand.

The performance ended with the most extraordinary chaos of noises: abuse and hisses hurled at Genovese and a fit of frenzy in praise of la Tinti. It was a long time since the Venetians had had so lively an evening. They were warmed and revived by that antagonism which is never lacking in Italy, where the smallest towns always throve on the antagonistic interests of two factions: the Guelphs and Ghibellines everywhere; the Capulets and the Montagues at Verona; the Geremei and the Lomelli at Bologna; the Fieschi and the Doria at Genoa; the patricians and the populace, the Senate and tribunes of the Roman republic; the Pazzi and the Medici at Florence; the Sforza and the Vis-

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conti at Milan; the Orsini and the Colonna at Rome,—in short, everywhere and on every occasion there has been the same impulse.

Out in the streets there were already *Genovists* and *Tintists.*

The Prince escorted the Duchess, more depressed than ever by the loves of Osiride; she feared some similar disaster to her own, and could only cling to Emilio, as if to keep him next her heart.

"Remember your promise," said Vendramin. "I will wait for you in the square."

Vendramin took the Frenchman's arm, proposing that they should walk together on the Piazza San Marco while awaiting the Prince.

"I shall be only be too glad if he should not come," he added.

This was the text for a conversation between the two, Vendramin regarding it as a favorable opportunity for consulting the physician, and telling him the singular position Emilio had placed himself in.

The Frenchman did as every Frenchman does on all occasions: he laughed. Vendramin, who took the matter very seriously, was angry; but he was mollified when the disciple of Majendie, of Cuvier, of Dupuytren, and of Brossais assured him that he believed he could cure the Prince of his high-flown raptures, and dispel the heavenly poetry in which he shrouded Massimilla as in a cloud.

"A happy form of misfortune!" said he. "The ancients, who were not such fools as might be inferred from their crystal heaven and their ideas on physics, symbolized in the fable of Ixion the power which nullifies the body and makes the spirit lord of all."

Vendramin and the doctor presently met Genovese, and with him the fantastic Capraja. The melomaniac was anxious to learn the real cause of the tenor's *fiasco.* Genovese, the question being put to him, talked fast, like all men

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who can intoxicate themselves by the ebullition of ideas suggested to them by a passion.

"Yes, signori, I love her, I worship her with a frenzy of which I never believed myself capable, now that I am tired of women. Women play the mischief with art. Pleasure and work cannot be carried on together. Clara fancies that I was jealous of her success, that I wanted to hinder her triumph at Venice; but I was clapping in the side-scenes, and shouted *Diva* louder than any one in the house."

"But even that," said Cataneo, joining them, "does not explain why, from being a divine singer, you should have become one of the most execrable performers who ever piped air through his larynx, giving none of the charm even which enchants and bewitches us."

"I!" said the singer. "I a bad singer! I who am the equal of the greatest performers!"

By this time, the doctor and Vendramin, Capraja, Cataneo, and Genovese had made their way to the piazzetta. It was midnight. The glittering bay, outlined by the churches of San Giorgio and San Paulo at the end of the Giudecca, and the beginning of the Grand Canal, that opens so mysteriously under the *Dogana* and the church of Santa Maria della Salute, lay glorious and still. The moon shone on the barques along the Riva de' Schiavoni. The waters of Venice, where there is no tide, looked as if they were alive, dancing with a myriad spangles. Never had a singer a more splendid stage.

Genovese, with an emphatic flourish, seemed to call Heaven and Earth to witness; and then, with no accompaniment but the lapping waves, he sang *Ombra adorata,* Crescentini's great air. The song, rising up between the statues of San Teodoro and San Giorgio, in the heart of sleeping Venice lighted by the moon, the words, in such strange harmony with the scene, and the melancholy passion of the singer, held the Italians and the Frenchman spell-bound.

At the very first notes, Vendramin's face was wet with

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tears. Capraja stood as motionless as one of the statues in the ducal palace. Cataneo seemed moved to some feeling. The Frenchman, taken by surprise, was meditative, like a man of science in the presence of a phenomenon that upsets all his fundamental axioms. These four minds, all so different, whose hopes were so small, who believed in nothing for themselves or after themselves, who regarded their own existence as that of a transient and fortuitous being,—like the little life of a plant or a beetle,—had a glimpse of Heaven. Never did music more truly merit the epithet divine. The consoling notes, as they were poured out, enveloped their souls in soft and soothing airs. On these vapors, almost visible, as it seemed to the listeners, like the marble shapes about them in the silver moonlight, angels sat whose wings, devoutly waving, expressed adoration and love. The simple, artless melody penetrated to the soul as with a beam of light. It was a holy passion!

But the singer's vanity roused them from their emotion with a terrible shock.

"Now, am I a bad singer?" he exclaimed, as he ended.

His audience only regretted that the instrument was not a thing of Heaven. This angelic song was then no more than the outcome of a man's offended vanity! The singer felt nothing, thought nothing, of the pious sentiments and divine images he could create in others,—no more, in fact, than Paganini's violin knows what the player makes it utter. What they had seen in fancy was Venice lifting its shroud and singing—and it was merely the result of a tenor's *fiasco!*

"Can you guess the meaning of such a phenomenon?" the Frenchman asked of Capraja, wishing to make him talk, as the Duchess had spoken of him as a profound thinker.

"What phenomenon?" said Capraja.

"Genovese—who is admirable in the absence of la Tinti, and when he sings with her is a braying ass."

"He obeys an occult law of which one of your chemists might perhaps give you the mathematical formula, and which the next century will no doubt express in a statement

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full of *x*, *a*, and *b*, mixed up with little algebraic signs, bars, and quirks that give me the colic; for the finest conceptions of mathematics do not add much to the sum total of our enjoyment.

"When an artist is so unfortunate as to be full of the passion he wishes to express, he cannot depict it because he is the thing itself instead of its image. Art is the work of the brain, not of the heart. When you are possessed by a subject you are a slave, not a master; you are like a king besieged by his people. Too keen a feeling, at the moment when you want to represent that feeling, causes an insurrection of the senses against the governing faculty."

"Might we not convince ourselves of this by some further experiment?" said the doctor.

"Cataneo, you might bring your tenor and the prima donna together again," said Capraja to his friend.

"Well, gentlemen," said the Duke, "come to sup with me. We ought to reconcile the tenor and la Clarina; otherwise the season will be ruined in Venice."

The invitation was accepted.

"Gondoliers!" called Cataneo.

"One minute," said Vendramin. "Memmi is waiting for me at Florian's; I cannot leave him to himself. We must make him tipsy to-night, or he will kill himself to-morrow."

"Corpo santo!" exclaimed the Duke. "I must keep that young fellow alive, for the happiness and future prospects of my race. I will invite him, too."

They all went back to Florian's, where the assembled crowd were holding an eager and stormy discussion to which the tenor's arrival put an end. In one corner, near a window looking out on the colonnade, gloomy, with a fixed gaze and rigid attitude, Emilio was a dismal image of despair.

"That crazy fellow," said the physician, in French, to Vendramin, "does not know what he wants. Here is a man who can make of a Massimilla Doni a being apart from the rest of creation, possessing her in heaven, amid ideal splendor such as no power on earth can make real. He can

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behold his mistress for ever sublime and pure; can always hear within him what we have just heard on the seashore; can always live in the light of a pair of eyes which create for him the warm and golden glow that surrounds the Virgin in Titian's Assumption,—after Raphael had invented it or had it revealed to him for the Transfiguration,—and this man only longs to smirch the poem.

"By my advice he must needs combine his sensual joys and his heavenly adoration in one woman. In short, like all the rest of us, he will have a mistress. He had a divinity, and the wretched creature insists on her being a female! I assure you, monsieur, he is resigning heaven. I will not answer for it that he may not ultimately die of despair.

"O ye women's faces, delicately outlined in a pure and radiant oval, reminding us of those creations of art where it has most successfully competed with nature! Divine feet that cannot walk, slender forms that an earthly breeze would break, shapes too frail ever to conceive, virgins that we dreamed of as we grew out of childhood, admired in secret, and adored without hope, veiled in the beams of some unwearying desire,—maids whom we may never see again, but whose smile remains supreme in our life, what hog of Epicurus could insist on dragging you down to the mire of this earth!

"The sun, monsieur, gives light and heat to the world, only because it is at a distance of thirty-three millions of leagues. Get nearer to it, and science warns you that it is not really hot or luminous,—for science is of some use," he added, looking at Capraja.

"Not so bad for a Frenchman and a doctor," said Capraja, patting the foreigner on the shoulder. "You have in those words explained the thing which Europeans least understand in all Dante: his Beatrice. Yes, Beatrice, that ideal figure, the queen of the poet's fancies, chosen above all the elect, consecrated with tears, deified by memory, and for ever young in the presence of ineffectual desire!"

"Prince," said the Duke to Emilio, "come and sup with

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me. You cannot refuse the poor Neapolitan whom you have robbed both of his wife and of his mistress."

This broad Neapolitan jest, spoken with an aristocratic good manner, made Emilio smile; he allowed the Duke to take his arm and lead him away.

Cataneo had already sent a messenger to his house from the café.

As the Palazzo Memmi was on the Grand Canal, not far from Santa Maria della Salute, the way thither on foot was round by the Rialto, or it could be reached in a gondola. The four guests would not separate and preferred to walk; the Duke's infirmities obliged him to get into his gondola.

At about two in the morning anybody passing the Memmi palace would have seen light pouring out of every window across the Grand Canal, and have heard the delightful overture to *Semiramide* performed at the foot of the steps by the orchestra of the *Fenice,* as a serenade to la Tinti.

The company were at supper in the second floor gallery. From the balcony la Tinti in return sang Almavida's *Buona sera* from *Il Barbiere,* while the Duke's steward distributed payment from his master to the poor artists and bid them to dinner the next day, such civilities as are expected of grand signors who protect singers, and of fine ladies who protect tenors and basses. In these cases there is nothing for it but to marry all the *corps de théâtre.*

Cataneo did things handsomely; he was the manager's banker, and this season was costing him two thousand crowns.

He had had all the palace furnished, had imported a French cook, and wines of all lands. So the supper was a regal entertainment.

The Prince, seated next la Tinti, was keenly alive, all through the meal, to what poets in every language call the darts of love. The transcendental vision of Massimilla was eclipsed, just as the idea of God is sometimes hidden by clouds of doubt in the consciousness of solitary thinkers. Clarina thought herself the happiest woman in the world as

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she perceived Emilio was in love with her. Confident of retaining him, her joy was reflected in her features, her beauty was so dazzling that the men, as they lifted their glasses, could not resist bowing to her with instinctive admiration.

"The Duchess is not to compare with la Tinti," said the Frenchman, forgetting his theory under the fire of the Sicilian's eyes.

The tenor ate and drank languidly; he seemed to care only to identify himself with the prima donna's life, and had lost the hearty sense of enjoyment which is characteristic of Italian men singers.

"Come, signorina," said the Duke, with an imploring glance at Clarina, "and you, *caro prima uomo,*" he added to Genovese, "unite your voices in one perfect sound. Let us have the C of *Qual portento,* when light appears in the oratorio we have just heard, to convince my old friend Capraja of the superiority of unison to any embellishment."

"I will carry her off from that Prince she is in love with; for she adores him—it stares me in the face'" said Genovese to himself.

What was the amazement of the guests who had heard Genovese out of doors, when he began to bray, to coo, mew, squeal, gargle, bellow, thunder, bark, shriek, even produce sounds which could only be described as a hoarse rattle,—in short, go through an incomprehensible farce, while his face was transfigured with rapturous expression like that of a martyr, as painted by Zurbaran or Murillo, Titian or Raphael. The general shout of laughter changed to almost tragical gravity when they saw that Genovese was in utter earnest. La Tinti understood that her companion was in love with her, and had spoken the truth on the stage, the land of falsehood.

"Poverino!" she murmured, stroking the Prince's hand under the table.

"By all that is holy!" cried Capraja, "will you tell me what score you are reading at this moment—murdering

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Rossini? Pray inform us what you are thinking about, what demon is struggling in your throat."

"A demon!" cried Genovese, "say rather the god of music. My eyes, like those of Saint-Cecilia, can see angels, who, pointing with their fingers, guide me along the lines of the score which is written in notes of fire, and I am trying to keep up with them. PER DIO! do you not understand? The feeling that inspires me has passed into my being; it fills my heart and my lungs; my soul and throat have but one life.

"Have you never, in a dream, listened to the most glorious strains, the ideas of unknown composers who have made use of pure sound as nature has hidden it in all things,—sound which we call forth, more or less perfectly, by the instruments we employ to produce masses of various color; but which in those dream-concerts are heard free from the imperfections of the performers who cannot be all feeling, all soul? And I, I give you that perfection, and you abuse me!

"You are as mad as the pit of the *Fenice,* who hissed me! I scorned the vulgar crowd for not being able to mount with me to the heights whence we reign over art, and I appeal to men of mark, to a Frenchman—— Why, he is gone!"

"Half an hour ago," said Vendramin.

"That is a pity. He, perhaps, would have understood me, since Italians, lovers of art, do not——"

"On you go!" said Capraja, with a smile, and tapping lightly on the tenor's head. "Ride off on the divine Ariosto's hippogriff; hunt down your radiant chimera, musical visionary as you are!"

In point of fact, all the others, believing that Genovese was drunk, let him talk without listening to him. Capraja alone had understood the case put by the French physician.

While the wine of Cyprus was loosening every tongue, and each one was prancing on his favorite hobby, the doctor, in a gondola, was waiting for the Duchess, having sent her a note written by Vendramin. Massimilla appeared in her night wrapper, so much had she been alarmed by the tone

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of the Prince's farewell, and so startled by the hopes held out by the letter.

"Madame," said the Frenchman, as he placed her in a seat and desired the gondoliers to start, "at this moment Prince Emilio's life is in danger, and you alone can save him."

"What is to be done?" she asked.

"Ah! Can you resign yourself to play a degrading part —in spite of the noblest face to be seen in Italy? Can you drop from the blue sky where you dwell, into the bed of a courtesan? In short, can you, an angel of refinement, of pure and spotless beauty, condescend to imagine what the love must be of a Tinti—in her room, and so effectually as to deceive the ardor of Emilio, who is indeed too drunk to be very clear-sighted?"

"Is that all?" said she, with a smile that betrayed to the Frenchman a side he had not as yet perceived of the delightful nature of an Italian woman in love. "I will out-do la Tinti, if need be, to save my friend's life."

"And you will thus fuse into one two kinds of love, which he sees as distinct—divided by a mountain of poetic fancy, that will melt away like the snow on a glacier under the beams of the midsummer sun."

"I shall be eternally your debtor," said the Duchess, gravely.

When the French doctor returned to the gallery, where the orgy had by this time assumed the stamp of Venetian frenzy, he had a look of satisfaction which the Prince, absorbed by la Tinti, failed to observe; he was promising himself a repetition of the intoxicating delights he had known. La Tinti, a true Sicilian, was floating on the tide of a fantastic passion on the point of being gratified.

The doctor whispered a few words to Vendramin, and la Tinti was uneasy.

"What are you plotting?" she inquired of the Prince's friend.

"Are you kind-hearted?" said the doctor in her ear, with the sternness of an operator.

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The words pierced to her comprehension like a dagger-thrust to her heart.

"It is to save Emilio's life," added Vendramin.

"Come here," said the doctor to Clarina.

The hapless singer rose and went to the other end of the table where, between Vendramin and the Frenchman, she looked like a criminal between the confessor and the executioner.

She struggled for a long time, but yielded at last for love of Emilio.

The doctor's last words were:

"And you must cure Genovese!"

She spoke a word to the tenor as she went round the table. She returned to the Prince, put her arm round his neck and kissed his hair with an expression of despair which struck Vendramin and the Frenchman, the only two who had their wits about them, then she vanished into her room. Emilio, seeing Genovese leave the table, while Cataneo and Capraja were absorbed in a long musical discussion, stole to the door of the bedroom, lifted the curtain, and skipped in, like an eel into the mud.

"But you see, Cataneo," said Capraja, "you have exacted the last drop of physical enjoyment, and there you are, hanging on a wire like a cardboard harlequin, patterned with scars, and never moving unless the string is pulled of a perfect unison."

"And you, Capraja, who have squeezed ideas dry, are not you in the same predicament? Do not you live riding the hobby of a *cadenza?*"

"I? I possess the whole world!" cried Capraja, with a sovereign gesture of his hand.

"And I have devoured it!" replied the Duke.

They observed that the physician and Vendramin were gone, and that they were alone.

Next morning, after a night of perfect happiness, the Prince's sleep was disturbed by a dream. He felt on his heart the trickle of pearls, dropped there by an angel: he

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woke, and found himself bathed in the tears of Massimilla Doni. He was lying in her arms, and she gazed at him as he slept.

That evening, at the *Fenice*,—though la Tinti had not allowed him to rise till two in the afternoon, which is said to be very bad for a tenor voice,—Genovese sang divinely in his part in *Semiramide*. He was recalled with la Tinti, fresh crowns were given, the pit was wild with delight; the tenor no longer attempted to charm the prima donna by angelic methods.

Vendramin was the only person whom the doctor could not cure. Love for a country that has ceased to be is a love beyond curing. The young Venetian, by dint of living in his thirteenth century republic, and in the arms of that pernicious courtesan called opium, when he found himself in the work-a-day world to which reaction brought him, succumbed, pitied and regretted by his friends.

Now, how shall the end of this adventure be told—for it is too disastrously domestic. A word will be enough for the worshipers of the ideal.

The Duchess was expecting an infant.

The Peris, the naiads, the fairies, the sylphs of ancient legend, the Muses of Greece, the Marble Virgins of the Certosa at Pavia, the Day and Night of Michael Angelo, the little Angels which Bellini was the first to put at the foot of his Church pictures, and which Raphael painted so divinely in his Virgin with the Donor, and the Madonna who shivers at Dresden, the lovely Maidens by Orcagna in the Church of San-Michele, at Florence, the celestial choir round the Tomb in Saint-Sebaldus, at Nuremberg, the Virgins of the Duomo, at Milan, the whole population of a hundred Gothic Cathedrals, all the race of beings who burst their mould to visit you, great imaginative artists—all these angelic and disembodied maidens gathered round Massimilla's bed, and wept!

PARIS, *May 25th*, 1839.

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A SEASIDE TRAGEDY*

To Madame la Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod, née Comtesse Walewska, this souvenir of the Author is respectfully dedicated.

THE young for the most part delight to measure the future with a pair of compasses of their own; when the strength of the will equals the boldness of the angle that they thus project, the whole world is theirs.

This phenomenon of mental existence takes place, however, only at a certain age, and that age, without exception, lies in the years between twenty-two and eight-and-twenty. It is an age of first conceptions, because it is an age of vast longings, an age which is doubtful of nothing; doubt at that time is a confession of weakness; it passes as swiftly as the sowing time, and is followed by the age of execution. There are in some sort two periods of youth in every life—the youth of confident hopes, and the youth of action; sometimes in those whom Nature has favored, the two ages coincide, and then we have a Cæsar, a Newton, or a Bonaparte—the greatest among great men.

I was measuring the space of time that a single thought needs for its development, and (compass in hand) stood on a crag a hundred fathoms above the sea, surveying my future, and filling it with great works, like an engineer who should survey an empty land, and cover it with fortresses and palaces. The sea was calm, the waves toyed with the reefs of rock. I had just dressed after a swim, and was waiting for Pauline, my guardian angel, who was bathing in a granite basin floored with fine sand, the daintiest bathing-place of Nature's fashioning for the sea-fairies.

*A letter written by Louis Lambert.

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We were at the utmost extremity of Croisic-point, a tiny peninsula in Brittany; we were far from the haven itself, and in a part of the coast so inaccessible that the inland revenue department ignored it, and a coastguard scarcely ever passed that way. Ah! to dip in the winds of space, after a plunge in the sea! Who would not have launched forth into the future? Why did I think? Why does a trouble invade us?—Who knows? Ideas drift across heart and brain by no will of yours. No courtesan is more capricious, more imperious, than an artist's inspiration; you must seize her like Fortune, and grasp her by the hair—when she comes. Borne aloft by my thought, like Astolpho upon his hippogriff, I rode across my world, and arranged it all to my liking. Then when I was fain to find some augury in the things about me for these daring castles that a wild imagination bade me build, I heard a sweet cry above the murmur of the restless sea-fringe that marks the ebb and flow of the tide upon the shore, the sound of a woman's voice calling to me through the loneliness and silence, the glad cry of a woman fresh from the sea. It was as if a soul leapt forth in that cry, and it seemed to me as if I had seen the footprints of an angel on the bare rocks, an angel with outspread wings, who cried, "You will succeed!" I came down, radiant and light of foot, by bounds, like a pebble flung down some steep slope. "What is it?" she asked as soon as she saw me, and I did not answer; my eyes were full of tears.

Yesterday Pauline had felt my sorrow, as to-day she felt my joy, with the magical responsiveness of a harp that is sensitive to every change in the atmosphere.—Life has exquisite moments. We went in silence along the beach. The sky was cloudless; there was not a ripple on the sea; others might have seen nothing there but two vast blue steppes above and below; but as for us, who had no need of words to understand each other, who could conjure up illusions to feast the eyes of youth and fill the space between the zones of sea and sky—those swaddling-bands of the Infinite—we pressed each other's hands at the slightest change that passed over the

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fields of water or the fields of air, for in those fleeting signs we read the interpretation of our double thought. Who has not known, in the midst of pleasure, the moment of infinite joy when the soul slips its fetters of flesh, as it were, and returns to the world whence it came? And pleasure is not our only guide to those regions; are there not hours when feeling and thought intertwine with thought and feeling, and fare forth together as two children who take each other by the hand and run, without knowing why? We went thus.

The roofs of the town had come to be a faint gray line on the horizon by the time that we came upon a poor fisherman on his way back to Croisic. He was barefooted; his trousers, of linen cloth, were botched, and tattered, and fringed with rags; he wore a shirt of sailcloth, and a mere rag of a jacket. This wretchedness jarred upon us, as if it had been a discordant note in the midst of our harmony. We both looked at each other, regretting that we had not Abul Kasim's treasury to draw upon at that moment. The fisherman was swinging a splendid lobster and an adder-pike on a string in his right hand, while in the left he carried his fishing tackle. We called to him, with a view to buying his fish. The same idea that occurred to us both found expression in a smile, to which I replied by a light pressure of the arm that lay in mine as I drew it closer to my heart.

It was one of those nothings that memory afterwards weaves into poems, when by the fireside our thoughts turn to the hour when that nothing so moved us, and the place rises before us seen through a mirage which as yet has not been investigated, a magical illusion that often invests material things about us during those moments when life flows swiftly and our hearts are full. The most beautiful places are only what we make them.

What man is there, with something of a poet in him, who does not find that some fragment of rock holds a larger place in his memories than famous views in many lands which he has made costly journeyings to see? Beside that rock what thoughts surged through him! There he lived through a

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whole life; there fears were dissipated, and gleams of hope shone into the depths of his soul. At that moment the sun, as if sympathizing with those thoughts of love or of the future, cast a glow of light and warmth over the tawny sides of the rock; his eyes were drawn to a mountain flower here and there on its sides, and the crannies and rifts grew larger in the silence and peace; the mass, so dark in reality, took the hue of his dreams; and then how beautiful it was with its scanty plant life, its pungent-scented camomile flowers, its velvet fronds of maiden-hair fern! How splendidly decked for a prolonged festival of human powers exultant in their strength! Once already the Lake of Bienne, seen from the island of Saint-Pierre, had so spoken to me; perhaps the rock at Croisic will be the last of these joys. But, then, what will become of Pauline?

"You have had a fine catch this morning, good man," I said to the fisherman.

"Yes, sir," he answered, coming to a stand; and we saw his face, swarthy with exposure to the sun's rays that beat down on the surface of the sea. The expression of his face told of the patient resignation and the simple manners of fisher folk. There was no roughness in the man's voice; he had a kindly mouth, and there was an indefinable something about him—ambitionless, starved, and stunted. We should have been disappointed if he had looked otherwise.

"Where will you sell the fish?"

"In the town."

"What will they give you for the lobster?"

"Fifteen sous."

"And for the adder-pike?"

"Twenty sous."

"Why does it cost so much more than the lobster?"

"Oh! the adder-pike" (he called it an *etter*-pike) "is much more delicate, sir! And then they are as spiteful as monkeys, and very hard to catch."

"Will you let us have them both for five francs?" asked Pauline. The man stood stock-still with astonishment.

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"You shall not have them!" I cried, laughing. "I bid ten francs for them. Emotions should be paid for at a proper rate."

"Quite right," returned she; "but I mean to have them. I bid ten francs two sous for them."

"Ten sous."

"Twelve francs."

"Fifteen francs."

"Fifteen francs fifty centimes," said she.

"A hundred francs."

"A hundred and fifty."

I bowed. We were not rich enough just then to bid against each other any longer. Our poor fisherman was mystified, not knowing whether to be annoyed or to give himself up to joy; but we helped him out of his difficulty by telling him where we lodged, and bidding him take the lobster and the adder-pike to our landlady.

"Is that how you make a living?" I asked, wondering how he came to be so poor.

"It is about all I can do, and it is a very hard life," he said. "Shore fishing is a chancy trade when you have neither boat nor nets and must do it with hooks and tackle. You have to wait for the tide, you see, for the fish or the shell-fish, while those who do things on a large scale put out to sea. It is so hard to make a living at it, that I am the only shore-fisher in these parts. For whole days together I get nothing at all. For if you are to catch anything, an adder-pike must fall asleep and get left by the tide, like this one here, or a lobster must be fool enough to stick to the rocks. Sometimes some basse come up with a high tide, and then I get hold of them."

"And, after all, taking one thing with another, what do you make each day?"

"Eleven or twelve sous. I could get on if I had no one but myself, but I have my father to keep, and the old man can't help me; he is blind."

The words came from him quite simply; Pauline and I looked at each other in silence.

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"Have you a wife or a sweetheart?"

He glanced at us with one of the most piteous expressions that I have ever seen on a human face, and answered, "If I had a wife, I should have to turn my old father adrift; I could not keep him and keep a wife and children too."

"But, my good fellow, why don't you try to earn more by carrying salt in the haven, or by working in the salt pits?"

"Ah! sir, I could not stand the work for three months. I am not strong enough, and if anything happened to me my father would have to beg. The only sort of work for me is something that wants a little skill and a lot of patience."

"But how can two people live on twelve sous a day?"

"Oh, sir, we live on buckwheat bannocks and the barnacles I break off the rocks."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Have you always stopped here?"

"I once went to Guérande to be drawn for the army, and once to Savenay to be examined by some gentlemen who measured me. If I had been an inch taller, they would have made me into a soldier. The first long march would have put an end to me, and my poor father would have been begging his bread this day."

I have imagined many tragedies, and Pauline, who passes her life by the side of a man who suffers as I do, is used to strong emotion, yet neither of us had ever heard words so touching as these of the fisherman. We walked on for several steps in silence, fathoming the dumb depths of this stranger's life, admiring the nobleness of a sacrifice made unconsciously; the strength of his weakness made us marvel, his reckless generosity humbled us. A vision of the life of this poor creature rose before me, a life of pure instinct, a being chained to his rock like a convict fettered to a cannon ball, seeking for shell-fish to gain a livelihood, and upheld in that long patience of twenty years by a single feeling! How many hopes disappointed by a squall, or a change in the weather! And while he was hanging over the edge of a block of granite with arms

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outstretched like a Hindoo fakir, his old father, crouching on his stool in the dark, silent hut, was waiting for the coarsest of the shell-fish, and bread, if the sea should please.

"Do you drink wine now and then?" I asked.

"Three or four times a year."

"Very well, you shall drink wine to-day, you and your father; and we will send you a white loaf."

"You are very kind, sir."

"We will give you the wherewithal for dinner, if you care to show us the way along the shore to Batz, where we shall see the tower that gives you a view of the harbor and the shore between Batz and Croisic."

"With pleasure," said he. "Go straight on, follow the road you are in; I will overtake you again when I have got rid of my tackle."

We both made the same sign of assent, and he rushed off towards the town in great spirits. We were still as we had been before, but the meeting had dimmed our joyousness.

"Poor man!" Pauline exclaimed, in the tone that takes from a woman's compassion any trace of the something that wounds us in pity, "it makes one ashamed to feel happy when he is so miserable, doesn't it?"

"There is nothing more bitter than helpless wishing," I answered. "The two poor creatures, this father and son, could no more understand how keen our sympathy has been than the world could understand the beauty in that life of theirs, for they are laying up treasures in heaven."

"Poor country!" she said, pointing out to me the heaps of cow-dung spread along a field under a wall of unhewn stones. "I asked why they did that, and a peasant woman who was spreading it said that she was 'making firewood.' Just imagine, dear, that when the cow-dung is dry, the poor people heap it up and light fires with it. During the winter they sell it, like blocks of bark fuel. And, finally, how much do you think the best-paid seamstresses earn?—Five sous a day and their board," she went on after a pause.

"Look," I said, "the sea-winds blight or uproot everything;

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there are no trees. Those who can afford it burn the drift-wood and broken-up boats; it costs too dear, I expect, to bring firewood from other parts of Brittany where there is so much timber. It is a country without beauty, save for great souls, and those who have no hearts could not live here—it is a land for poets and barnacles, and nothing between. It was only when the salt warehouses were built on the cliff that people came to live here. There is nothing here but the sand, the sea beyond it, and above us—space."

We had already passed the town, and were crossing the waste between Croisic and the market town of Batz. Imagine, dear uncle, two leagues of waste covered with gleaming sand. Here and there a few rocks raised their heads; you might almost think that extinct monsters were crouching among the dunes. The waves broke over the low ridges along the margin of the sea, till they looked like large white roses floating on the surface of the water and drifted up upon the beach. I looked across this savanna that lay between the ocean on the right and the great lagoon on the left, made by the encroaching sea between Croisic and the sandy heights of Guérande, with the barren salt marshes at their feet; then I looked at Pauline, and asked if she felt able to walk across the sands in the burning sun.

"I have laced boots on; let us go over there," she said, looking towards the Tower of Batz, which caught the eye by its great mass, erected there like a pyramid in the desert, a slender spindle-shaped pyramid however, a pyramid so picturesquely ornate that one could imagine it to be an outlying sentinel ruin of some great Eastern town laid desolate.

We went a few paces further to reach a fragment of rock to sit in the shade that it still cast, but it was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the shadows which crept closer and closer to our feet swiftly disappeared altogether.

"How beautiful the silence is," she said; "and how the murmur of the sea beating steadily against the beach deepens it!"

"If you surrender your mind to the three immensities

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around us—the air, the sea, and the sands," I answered, "and heed nothing but the monotonous sound of the ebb and flow, you would find its speech intolerable, for you would think that it bore the burden of a thought that would overwhelm you. Yesterday, at sunset, I felt that sensation; it crushed me."

"Oh yes, let us talk," she said after a long pause. "No speaker is more terrible. I imagine that I am discovering the causes of the harmonies about us," she went on. "This landscape that has but three contrasting colors—the gleaming yellow of the sand, the blue heaven, and the changeless green of the sea—is great without anything savage in its grandeur, vast but not desolate, monotonous but not dreary; it is made up of three elements; it has variety."

"Women alone can render their impressions like that," I said; "you would be the despair of a poet, dear soul that I have read so well."

"These three expressions of the Infinite glow like a burning flame in the noonday heat," Pauline said, laughing. "Here I can imagine the poetry and passions of the East."

"And I, a vision of Despair."

"Yes," she said; "the dune is a sublime cloister."

We heard our guide hurrying after us; he wore his holiday clothes. We asked him a few insignificant questions; he thought he saw that our mood had changed, and, with the self-repression that misfortune teaches, he was silent; and we also—though from time to time each pressed the hand of the other to communicate thoughts and impressions—walked for half an hour in silence, either because the shimmering heat above the sands lay heavily upon us, or because the difficulty of walking absorbed our attention. We walked hand in hand like two children; we should not have gone a dozen paces if we had walked arm in arm.

The way that led to Batz was little more than a track; the first high winds effaced the ruts or the dints left by horses' hoofs; but the experienced eyes of our guide discerned traces of cattle and sheep dung on this way, which sometimes wound

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towards the sea, sometimes towards the land, to avoid the cliffs on the one hand and the rocks on the other. It was noon, and we were only half-way.

"We will rest there," I said, pointing to a headland where the rocks rose high enough to make it probable that we might find a cave among them. The fisherman, following the direction of my finger, jerked his head.

"There is some one there! Any one coming from market at Batz to Croisic, or from Croisic to Batz, always goes round some way so as not to pass near the place."

He spoke in a low voice that suggested a mystery.

"Then is there a robber there, a murderer?"

Our guide's only answer was a deep breath that left us twice as curious as before.

"If we go past, will any harm come to us?"

"Oh no!"

"Will you go with us?"

"No, sir!"

"Then we shall go, if you will assure us that there is no danger for us."

"I do not say that," the fisherman answered quickly; "I only say that the one who is there will say nothing to you, and will do you no harm. Oh, good heavens! he will not so much as stir from his place."

"Then who is it?"

"A man!"

Never were two syllables uttered in such a tragical fashion.

At that moment we were some twenty paces away from the ridge about which the sea was lapping. Our guide took the way that avoided the rocks, and we held straight on for them, but Pauline took my arm. Our guide quickened his pace so as to reach the spot where the two ways met again at the same time as ourselves. He thought, no doubt, that when we had seen "the man," we should hurry from the place. This kindled our curiosity; it became so strong that our hearts beat fast, as if a feeling of terror possessed us both. In spite of the heat of the day and a certain weariness after our walk

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over the sands, our souls were steeped in the ineffable languid calm of an ecstasy that possessed us both, brimming with pure joy, that can only be compared with the delight of hearing exquisite music—music like the *Andiamo mio ben* of Mozart. When two souls are blended in one pure thought, are they not like two sweet voices singing together? Before you can appreciate the emotion that thrilled us both, you must likewise share in the half-voluptuous mood in which the morning's experiences had steeped us.

If you had watched for a while some daintily colored wood-dove on a swaying branch, above a spring, you would utter a cry of distress if you saw a hawk pounce down, bury claws of steel in its heart, and bear it away with the murderous speed with which powder wings a bullet. We had scarcely set foot in the space before the cavern, a sort of esplanade some hundred feet above the sea, protected from the surge by the steep rocks that sloped to the water's edge, when we were conscious of an electric thrill, something like the shock of a sudden awakening by some noise in a silent night. Both of us had seen a man sitting there on a block of granite, and he had looked at us.

That glance, from two bloodshot eyes, was like the flash of fire from a cannon, and his stoical immobility could only be compared to the changeless aspect of the granite slabs that lay about him. Slowly his eyes turned towards us; his body as rigid and motionless as if he had been turned to stone; then after that glance, that made such a powerful impression upon our minds, his eyes turned to gaze steadily over the vast stretch of sea, in spite of the glare reflected from it, as the eagle, it is said, gazes at the sun without lowering his eyelids, nor did he look up again from the waves.

Try to call up before you, dear uncle, some gnarled oak stump, with all its branches lately lopped away, rearing its head, like a strange apparition, by the side of a lonely road, and you will have a clear idea of this man that we saw. The form of an age-worn Hercules, the face of Olympian Jove bearing marks of the ravages of time, of a life of rough toil upon

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the sea, of sorrow within, of coarse food, and darkened as if blasted by lightning. I saw the muscles, like a framework of iron, standing out upon his hard shaggy hands, and all things else about him indicated a vigorous constitution. In a corner of the cavern I noticed a fairly large heap of moss, and on a rough slab of granite, that did duty as a table, a piece of a round loaf lay over the mouth of a stoneware pitcher.

Never among my visions of the life led in the desert by early Christian anchorites had I pictured a face more awe-inspiring, more grand and terrible in repentance than this. And even you, dear uncle, in your experience of the confessional, have, perhaps, never seen a penitence so grand; for this remorse seemed to be drowned in a sea of prayers, of prayers that flowed for ever from a dumb despair. This fisherman, this rough Breton sailor, was sublime through a thought hidden within him. Had those eyes shed tears? Had the hand of that rough-hewn statue ever struck a blow? A fierce honesty was stamped upon a rugged forehead where force of character had still left some traces of the gentleness that is the prerogative of all true strength. Was that brow, so scored and furrowed with wrinkles, compatible with a great heart? How came this man to abide with the granite? How had the granite entered into him? Where did the granite end and the man begin? A whole crowd of thoughts passed through our minds; and, as our guide had expected, we went by quickly and in silence. When he saw us again, we were either perturbed with a sense of dread, or overcome by the strangeness of this thing, but he did not remind us that his prediction had come true.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"What is the man?"

"They call him the 'man under a vow.'"

You can readily imagine how we both turned to our fisherman at these words. He was a simple-minded fellow; he understood our mute inquiry; and this is the story which I have tried to tell, as far as possible, in the homely language in which he told it.

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She saw the father take the son . . and fling him into the water

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the sea, of sorrow within, of coarse food, and darkened a ... lightning. I saw the muscles, like a frame ... of iron, ... out upon his hard shaggy hands, and ... about him indicated a vigorous constitution ... of the cavern I noticed a fairly large heap of ... and on a rough slab of granite, that did duty as a t... of a round loaf lay over the mouth of a sto...

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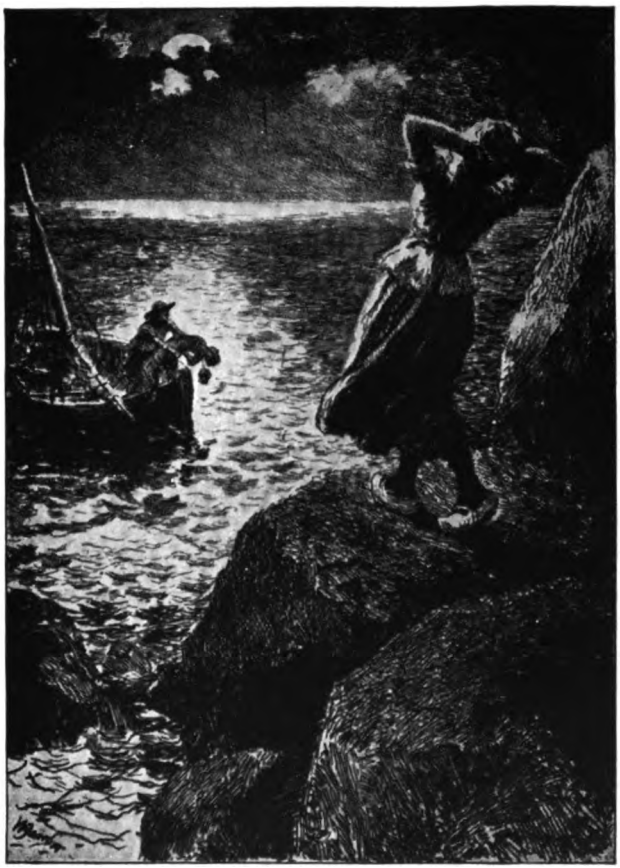

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"The Croisic folk and the people at Batz think that he has been guilty of something, madame, and that he is doing a penance laid upon him by a famous *recteur,* to whom he went to confess, beyond Nantes. There are some who think that Cambremer (that is his name) is unlucky, and that it brings bad luck to pass through the air he breathes, so a good many of them before going round the rocks will stop to see which way the wind blows. If it blows from the nor'west," he said, pointing in that direction with his finger, "they would not go on if they had set out to seek a bit of the True Cross; they turn back again; they are afraid. Other folk, rich people in Croisic, say that Cambremer once made a vow, and that is why he is called 'the man under a vow.' He never leaves the place; he is there night and day.

"There is some show of reason for these tales," he added, turning round to point out to us something that had escaped our notice. "You see that wooden cross that he has set up there on the left; that is to show that he has put himself under the protection of God and the Holy Virgin and the Saints. He would not be respected as he is, if it were not that the terror people have of him makes him as safe as if he had a guard of soldiers.

"He has not said a word since he went into prison in the open air. He lives on bread and water that his brother's little girl brings him every morning, a little slip of a thing twelve years old; he has left all he has to her, and a pretty child she is, as gentle as a lamb, and full of fun, a dear little pet. She has blue eyes as long as *that,*" he went on, holding out his thumb, "and hair like a cherub's. When you begin—'I say, Pérotte'—(that is what we say for *Pierrette,*" he said, interrupting himself; "Saint Pierre is her patron saint, Cambremer's name is Pierre, and he was her godfather)—'I say, Pérotte, what does your uncle say to you?'—'He says nothing,' says she, 'nothing whatever, nothing at all.'—'Well, then, what does he do when you go?'—'He kisses me on the forehead of a Sunday.'—'Aren't you afraid of him?'—'Not a bit,' says she; 'he is my godfather.'—He will not have any one else

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bring his food. Pérotte says that he smiles when she comes; but you might as well say that the sun shone in a fog, for he is as gloomy as a sea mist, they say."

"But you are exciting our curiosity without satisfying it," I broke in. "Do you know what brought him there? Was it trouble, or remorse, or crime, or is he mad, or what?"

"Eh! sir, there is hardly a soul save my father and me that knows the rights of the matter. My mother that's gone was in service in the house of the justice that Cambremer went to. The priest told him to go to a justice, and only gave him absolution on that condition, if the tale is true that they tell in the haven. My poor mother overheard Cambremer without meaning to do so, because the kitchen was alongside the sitting-room in the justice's house. So she heard. She is dead, and the justice has gone too. My mother made us promise, my father and me, never to let on to the people round about; and I can tell *you* this, every hair bristled up on my head that night when my mother told us the story——"

"Well, then, tell it to us; we will not repeat it."

The fisherman looked at us both—then he went on, something after this fashion:

"Pierre Cambremer, whom you saw yonder, is the oldest of the family. The Cambremers have been seamen from father to son; you see, their name means that the sea has always bent under them. The one you saw had a fishing-boat, several fishing-boats, and the sardine-fishery was his trade, though he did deep-sea fishing as well for the dealers. He would have fitted out a bigger vessel, and gone to the cod-fishing, if he had not been so fond of his wife; a fine woman she was, a Brouin from Guérande, a strapping girl with a warm heart. She was so fond of Cambremer that she would never let her man go away from her for longer than for the sardine-fishing. They lived down yonder, there!" said our fisherman, standing on a hillock to point out to us an islet in the little inland sea between the dunes where we were walking and the salt marshes at Guérande. "Do you see the house? It belonged to him.

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"Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer had but one child, a boy, whom they loved like—what shall I say?—like an only child; they were crazy over him. Their little Jacques might have done something (asking your pardon) into the soup, and they would have thought it sweetened it. Times and times again we used to see them, buying the finest toys at the fair for him! There was no sense in it—everybody told them so. Little Cambremer found out that he could do as he liked with them, and he grew as wilful as a red donkey. If any one told his father, 'Your boy has all but killed little So-and-So,' Cambremer used to laugh and say, 'Bah! he will be a mettlesome sailor! He will command the king's ships.' Another would say, 'Pierre Cambremer, do you know that your lad put out Pougaud's little girl's eye?'—'He will be one for the girls,' Pierre would say. It was all right in his eyes. By the time the little rascal was ten years old he knocked everybody about, and twisted the fowls' necks for fun, and ripped open the pigs; he was as bloodthirsty as a weasel. 'He will make a famous soldier!' said Cambremer; 'he has a liking for bloodshed.'

"You see, I myself remember all this," said our fisherman; "and so does Cambremer," he added, after a pause.

"Jacques Cambremer grew up to be fifteen or sixteen, and he was—well, a bully. He would go off and amuse himself at Guérande, and cut a figure at Savenay. He must have money for that. So he began robbing his mother, and she did not dare to tell her husband. Cambremer was so honest that if any one had overpaid him twopence on an account, he would have gone twenty leagues to pay it back. At last one day the mother had nothing left. While the father was away at the fishing, Jacques made off with the dresser, the plenishing, and the sheets and the linen, and left nothing but the four walls; he had sold all the things in the house to pay for his carryings-on at Nantes. The poor woman cried about it day and night. She would have to tell his father when he came back, and she was afraid of the father; not for herself though, not she! So when Pierre Cambremer came back

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and saw his house furnished with things the neighbors had lent her, he asked:

"'What does this mean?'

"And the poor thing, more dead than alive, answered, 'We have been robbed.'

"'What has become of Jacques?'

"'Jacques is away on a spree!'

"Nobody knew where the rogue had gone.

"'He is too fond of his fun,' said Pierre.

"Six months afterwards the poor father heard that Jacques had got into trouble at Nantes. He goes over on foot—it is quicker than going by sea—puts his hand on his son's shoulder, and fetches him home. He did not ask him, 'What have you been doing?'

"'If you don't keep steady here for a couple of years with your mother and me,' he said, 'and help with the fishing, and behave yourself like a decent fellow, you will have me to reckon with!'

"The harebrained youngster, counting on the weakness his father and mother had for him, made a grimace at his father, and thereupon Pierre fetched him a slap in the face that laid up Jacques for six months afterwards.

"The poor mother was breaking her heart all the time. One night she was lying quietly asleep by her husband's side, when she heard a noise and sat up, and got a stab in the arm from a knife. She shrieked; and when they had struck a light, Pierre Cambremer found that his wife was wounded. He thought it was a robber, as if there were any robbers in our part of the world, when you can carry ten thousand francs in gold from Croisic to Saint Nazaire, and no one would so much as ask you what you had under your arm. Pierre looked about for Jacques, and could not find him anywhere. In the morning the unnatural wretch had the face to come back and say that he had been at Batz.

"I should tell you that the mother did not know where to hide her money. Cambremer himself used to leave his with M. Dupotet at Croisic. Their son's wild ways had eaten up

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crowns and francs and gold louis; they were ruined, as you may say, and it was hard on folk who had about twelve thousand livres, including their little island. Nobody knew how much Cambremer had paid down at Nantes to have his son back. Their luck went from bad to worse. One of Cambremer's brothers was unfortunate, and wanted help. Pierre told him, to comfort him, that Jacques and Pérotte (the younger brother's girl) should be married some day. Then, to put him in the way of earning his bread, he took him to help in the fishing; for Joseph Cambremer was obliged to work with his own hands. His wife had died of the fever, and he had to pay some one else to nurse Pérotte till she was weaned. Pierre Cambremer's wife owed as much as a hundred francs to different people on the baby's account for linen and things, and two or three months to big Frelu, who had a child by Simon Gaudry, and nursed Pérotte. La Cambremer, too, had sewn a Spanish doubloon into the flock of her mattress, and written on it 'For Pérotte.' You see, she had had a good education, and could write like a clerk; she had taught her son to read too—that was the ruin of him.

"Nobody knew how it came about, but that scoundrel Jacques got wind of the gold and took it, and went off to get drunk at Croisic. Old Cambremer, just as if it had happened on purpose, came in with his boat; and as he came up to the house he saw a scrap of paper floating about. He picked it up and took it to his wife; and she dropped down, for she knew her own handwriting. Cambremer said not a word. He went over to Croisic, and heard there that his son was in the billiard-room. Then he sent for the good woman who kept the café, and said to her:

"'I told Jacques not to change a piece of gold that he will pay his score with: let me have it; I will wait at the door, and you shall have silver for it.'

"The woman of the house brought him out the gold-piece. Cambremer took it.

"'Good!' said he, and he went away home.

"All the town knew that. But this I know, and the rest

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of them have only a sort of general guess at how it was. He told his wife to set their room to rights; it is on the ground floor. He kindled a fire on the hearth, he lighted two candles, and put two chairs on one side of the fireplace, and a three-legged stool on the other. Then he bade his wife put out the suit he was married in, and to put on her wedding gown. He dressed himself; and then when he was dressed, he went out for his brother, and told him to keep watch outside the house, and give warning if he heard any sound on either beach, here by the sea or yonder on the salt marshes at Guérande. When he thought his wife must be dressed, he went in again; he loaded a gun, and hid it in the chimney corner.

"Back comes Jacques to the house. It was late when he came; he had been drinking and gambling up to ten o'clock; he had got some one to ferry him over at Carnouf point. His uncle heard him hail the boat, and went to look for him along the side of the salt marshes, and passed him without saying anything.

"When Jacques came in, his father spoke.

" 'Sit you down there,' he said, pointing to the stool. 'You are before your father and mother; you have sinned against them, and they are your judges.'

"Jacques began to bellow, for Cambremer's face twitched strangely. The mother sat there, stiff as an oar.

" 'If you make any noise, if you stir, if you don't sit straight up like a mast on your stool,' said Pierre, pointing his gun at him, 'I will shoot you like a dog.'

"Cambremer's son grew mute as a fish, and all this time the mother said not a word.

" 'Here is a bit of paper that wrapped up a Spanish gold coin. That coin was in your mother's mattress. No one knew where it was except your mother. I found the bit of paper floating on the water when I came in. Only this evening you changed the piece of Spanish gold at Mother Fleurant's, and your mother cannot find the coin in her mattress.—Explain yourself.'

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"Jacques said that he had not taken his mother's money, and that he had had the coin at Nantes.

"'So much the better,' said Pierre. 'How can you prove it?'

"'I did have it.'

"'You did not take your mother's coin?'

"'No.'

"'Can you swear it on your salvation?'

"He was just going to swear, when his mother looked up and said:

"'Jacques, my child, take care; do not swear if it is not true. . . . You can repent and mend; there is still time,' and she cried at that.

"'You are a So-and-So,' said he; 'you have always tried to ruin me.'

"Cambremer turned white, and said, 'What you have just said to your mother goes to swell your account. Now, come to the point! Will you swear?'

"'Yes.'

"'Stop a bit,' said Pierre, 'was there a cross on your coin like the mark the sardine merchant put on the coin he paid me?'

"Jacques grew sober at that, and began to cry.

"'That is enough talk,' said Pierre. 'I say nothing of what you have done before—I have no mind that a Cambremer should die in the market-place at Croisic. Say your prayers, and let us be quick! A priest is coming to hear your confession.'

"The mother had gone out of the room that she might not hear her son's doom. As soon as she went out, Joseph Cambremer, the uncle, came in with the *recteur* from Piriac. To him Jacques would not open his mouth. He was shrewd; he knew his father well enough to feel sure that he would not kill him till he had confessed.

"'Thanks. Pardon us, sir,' Cambremer said to the priest when Jacques continued obstinate. 'I meant to give my son a lesson, and I beg you to say nothing about it.—As for you,'

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he went on, turning to Jacques, 'if you do not mend your ways, next time you go wrong shall be the last, and shrift or no shrift, I will make an end of it.'

"He sent him off to bed. The young fellow believed him, and fancied that he could make things right with his father. He slept. His father sat up. When he saw his son fast asleep, he covered the young fellow's mouth with hemp, bound it tightly round with a strip of sailcloth; then he tied him hand and foot. He writhed, he 'shed tears of blood,' so Cambremer told the justice. What would you have! His mother flung herself at the father's feet.

"'He is doomed,' said Cambremer; 'you will help me to put him into the boat.'

"She would not help him, and Cambremer did it alone; he fastened him down in the bottom of the boat, and tied a stone round his neck, put out of the bay, and reached the sea, and came out as far as the rock where he sits now. Then the poor mother, who had made her brother-in-law take her over, cried out in vain for mercy; it was like throwing a stone at a wolf. By the moonlight she saw the father take the son, towards whom her heart still yearned, and fling him into the water; and as there was not a breath of air stirring, she heard the gurgling sound, and then *nothing*—not an eddy, not a ripple; the sea is a famous keeper of secrets, that it is! When Cambremer reached the place to silence her moans, he found her lying like one dead. The two brothers could not carry her, so they had to put her in the boat that had carried her son, and they took her round home by way of the Croisic channel.

"Ah, well! *la belle Brouin,* as they called her, did not live the week out. She died, asking her husband to burn the accursed boat. Oh! he did it; yes, he did it. He himself was queer after that; he did not know what ailed him; he reeled about like a man who cannot carry his wine. Then he went off somewhere for ten days, and came back again to put himself where you saw him; and since he has been there, he has not said a word."

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The fisherman told us the story in a few minutes, in words even more simple than those that I have used. Working people make little comment on what they tell; they give you the facts that strike them, and interpret them by their own feelings. His language was as keenly incisive as the stroke of a hatchet.

"I shall not go to Batz," said Pauline, when we reached the outer rim of the lake.

We went back to Croisic by way of the salt marshes, the fisherman guiding us through the labyrinth. He also had grown silent. Our mood had changed. Both of us were deep in melancholy musings, and saddened by the mournful story which explained the swift presentiment that we had felt at the sight of Cambremer. We had each of us sufficient knowledge of human nature to fill in the outlines of the three lives that our guide had sketched for us. The tragedy of these three human beings rose up before us as if we saw scene after scene of a drama crowned by the father's expiation of an inevitable crime. We did not dare to look at the rocks where he sat, the fate-bound soul who struck terror into a whole country-side. A few clouds overcast the sky. The mist rose on the horizon of the sea. We were walking through the most acrid dreariness that I have ever seen; the earth beneath our feet seemed sick and unwholesome in these salt marshes which, with good reason, might be called a cutaneous eruption on the face of the earth. The ground is scored over in rough squares, with high banks of gray earth about them; each is full of brackish water; the salt rises to the surface. These artificial hollows are intersected by raised pathways, on which the workmen stand to skim the surface of the pools with long scrapers; and the salt, when collected, is deposited to drain on circular platforms set at even distances, till it is fit to lay up in heaps. For two hours we skirted this dreary chessboard, where the salt stops the growth of any green thing; occasionally, at long intervals, we came upon one or two *paludiers,* so they call the men who work among the salt

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marshes. These workers, or it should rather be said, this race apart among the Bretons, wear a special costume, a white jacket rather like those that brewers wear. They marry only among themselves; a girl belonging to this tribe has never been known to marry any one but a *paludier*. The hideous desolation of those swamps where the boggy soil is scraped up into symmetrical heaps, the grayness of the soil, from which every Breton flower shrinks in disgust, was in keeping with the sadness within us. We reached the spot where you cross an arm of the sea, the channel doubtless through which the salt water breaks in upon the low-lying land and leaves its deposits on the soil, and we were glad to see the scanty plant-life growing along the edge of the sand. As we crossed it, we saw the island in the lagoon where the Cambremers once lived, and turned our heads away.

When we reached our inn we noticed a billiard-table in the room on the ground floor, and when we learned that it was the only public billiard-table in Croisic, we made our preparations for departure that night, and on the morrow we went to Guérande.

Pauline was still depressed, and I myself felt a return of the burning sensation that scorches my brain. I was so grievously haunted by the visions of those three lives that I had conjured up, that Pauline said, "Write the story, Louis, and the fever may take a turn."

So, dear uncle, I have written the story for you; but our adventure has already undone the good effects of repose, the result of our stay here and at the Baths.

PARIS, *November* 20, 1834.

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THE RED INN

To Monsieur le Marquis de Custine.

Once upon a time (I forget the exact year) a Parisian banker, who had very extensive business relations with Germany, gave a dinner party in honor of one of the friends that merchants make in this place and that by correspondence, a sort of friendship that subsists for a long while between men who have never met. The friend, the senior partner of some considerable firm in Nuremberg, was a stout, good-natured German, a man of learning and of taste, more particularly in the matter of tobacco pipes. He was a typical Nuremberger, with a pleasant, broad countenance and a massive, square forehead, with a few stray fair hairs here and there; a typical German, a son of the stainless and noble Fatherland, so fertile in honorable characters, preserving its manners uncorrupted even after seven invasions. The stranger laughed simply, listened attentively, and drank with marked enjoyment, seeming to like champagne perhaps as well as the pale red wines of the Johannisberg. Like nearly every German in nearly every book, he was named Hermann; and in the quality of a man who does nothing with levity, he was comfortably seated at the banker's table, eating his way through the dinner with the Teutonic appetite renowned all over Europe, and thorough indeed was his manner of bidding adieu to all the works of the great Carême.

The master of the house had invited several intimate friends to do honor to his guest. These were for the most part capitalists or merchants, interspersed with a few pretty and agreeable women, whose light, graceful talk and frank

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manner harmonized with German open-heartedness. And, indeed, if you could have seen, as I had the pleasure of seeing, this blithe gathering of folk who had sheathed the active claws employed in raking in wealth, that they might make the best of an opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of life, you would scarcely have found it in your heart to grudge high rates of interest or to revile defaulters. A man cannot always be in mischief. Even in the society of pirates, for instance, there must surely be a pleasant hour now and then when you may feel at your ease beneath the black flag.

"Oh, I do hope that before M. Hermann goes he will tell us another dreadful, thrilling German story!"

The words were uttered over the dessert by a pale, fair-haired young lady, who had doubtless been reading Hoffmann's tales and Sir Walter Scott's novels. She was the banker's only daughter, an irresistibly charming girl, whose education was being finished at the Gymnase; she was wild about the plays given there. The dinner party had just reached the period of lazy content and serene disinclination to talk that succeeds an excellent dinner in the course of which somewhat heavy demands have been made upon the digestion; when the guests lean back in their chairs and play idly with the gilded knife-blades, while their wrists repose lightly on the table edge; the period of decline when some torment apple pips, or knead a crumb of bread between thumb and finger, when the sentimental write illegible initials among the *débris* of the dessert, and the penurious count the stones on their plates, and arrange them round the edge, as a playwright marshals the supernumeraries at the back of the stage. These are minor gastronomical pleasures which Brillat-Savarin has passed over unnoticed, exhaustively as he has treated his subject in other respects.

The servants had disappeared. The dessert, like a squadron after an action, was quite disorganized, disarrayed, forlorn. In spite of persistent efforts on the part of the mistress of the house, the various dishes strayed about the table. People fixed their eyes on the Swiss views that adorned the gray

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walls of the dining-room. No one felt it tedious. The man has yet to be found who can mope while he digests a good dinner. At that time we like to sit steeped in an indescribable calm, a sort of golden mean between the two extremes of the thinker's musings and the sleek content of the ruminating brute, which should be termed the physical melancholy of gastronomy.

So the party turned spontaneously towards the worthy German, all of them delighted to listen to a tale, even if it should be a dull one. During this beatific pause, the mere sound of the voice of the one who tells the story is soothing to our languid senses; it is one more aid to passive enjoyment. As an amateur of pictures, I watched the faces, bright with smiles, lit up by the light of the tapers and flushed with good cheer; the different expressions produced piquant effects among the sconces, the porcelain baskets of fruit, and the crystal glasses.

One face, exactly opposite, particularly struck my imagination. It belonged to a middle-sized man, tolerably stout and jovial-looking; who from his manner and appearance seemed to be a stockbroker, and, so far as one could see, gifted with no extraordinary amount of brains. Hitherto I had not noticed him, but at that moment his face, obscured, to be sure, by a bad light, seemed to me to undergo a total change; it took a cadaverous hue, veined with purple streaks. You might have taken it for the ghastly countenance of a man in the death agony. Impassive as a painted figure in a diorama, he was staring stupidly at the facets of a crystal decanter-stopper, but he certainly took no heed of them; he seemed to be deep in some visionary contemplation of the future or of the past. A long scrutiny of this dubious-looking face made me think.

"Is he ill?" I asked myself. "Has he taken too much wine? Is he ruined by the fall of the funds? Is he thinking how to cheat his creditors?—Look!" I said to the lady who sat next to me, calling her attention to the stranger's face, "that is a budding bankruptcy, is it not?"

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"Oh!" she answered, "if it were, he would be in better spirits." Then, with a graceful toss of her head, she added: "If that individual ever ruins himself, I will take the news to Pekin myself. He is a rather eccentric old gentleman worth a million in real estate; he used to be a contractor to the Imperial armies. He married again, as a business speculation, but he makes his wife very happy for all that. He has a pretty daughter, whom for a very long time he would not recognize; but when his son died by a sad accident in a duel, he was obliged to take her home, for he was not likely to have any more children. So all at once the poor girl became one of the richest heiresses in Paris. The loss of his only son threw the poor dear man into great grief, and he still shows signs of it at times."

As she spoke the army contractor looked up, and our eyes met; his expression made me shudder, it was so gloomy and so sad. Assuredly a whole life was summed up in that glance. Then in a moment he looked cheerful. He took up the glass stopper, put it unthinkingly into the mouth of the water decanter that stood on the table in front of him, and turned smilingly towards M. Hermann. The man was positively beaming with full-fed content, and had, no doubt, not two ideas in his head; he had been thinking of nothing! I was in some sort ashamed to have thrown away my powers of divination *in animâ vili,* to have taken this thick-skulled capitalist as a subject. But while I was making my phrenological observations in pure waste, the good-natured German had flicked a few grains of snuff off his face and begun his story.

It would be a passably difficult matter to give it in the same words, with his not infrequent interruptions and wordy digressions; so I have written it after my own fashion, omitting these defects of the Nuremberger's narrative, and helping myself to such elements of poetry and interest as it may possess, emulating the modesty of other writers who omit the formula *translated from the German* from their title-pages.

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I.

THE IDEA AND THE DEED

"Towards the end of Vendémiaire, in the year VII. of the Republican era (a date that corresponds to the 20th of October, present style), two young men were making their way towards Andernach, a little town on the left bank of the Rhine, a few leagues from Coblentz. The travelers had set out from Bonn that morning, and now the day was drawing to a close. At that particular time a French army under command of General Augereau was keeping in check the Austrians on the right bank of the river. The headquarters of the Republican division were at Coblentz, and one of the demi-brigades belonging to Augereau's corps was quartered in Andernach.

"The two wayfarers were Frenchmen. At first sight of their blue and white uniforms, with red velvet facings, their sabres, and, above all, their caps covered with green oilcloth and adorned with a tricolor cockade, the German peasants themselves might have known them for a pair of army surgeons, men of science and of sterling worth, popular for the most part not only in the army, but also in the countries occupied by French troops. At that time many young men of good family, torn from their medical studies by General Jourdan's conscription law, not unnaturally preferred to continue their studies on the battlefield to compulsory service in the ranks, a life ill suited to their antecedents and unwarlike ambitions. Men of this stamp, studious, serviceable, peaceably inclined, did some good among so many evils, and found congenial spirits among the learned of the various countries invaded by the ruthless affranchisement of the Republic.

"These two, provided with a route of the road, and with assistant-surgeons' commissions signed by La Coste and Bernadotte, were on their way to join the demi-brigade to

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which they were attached. Both belonged to well-to-do middle families in Beauvais, the traditions of gentle breeding and of provincial integrity had been a part of their inheritance. A curiosity quite natural in youth had brought them to the seat of war before the time fixed for entrance on active service, and they had come by the *diligence* as far as Strasbourg. Maternal prudence had suffered them to leave home with a very scanty supply of money, but they felt rich in the possession of a few louis; and, indeed, at a time when assignats had reached the lowest point of depreciation, those few louis meant wealth, for gold was at a high premium.

"The two assistant-surgeons, aged twenty years at most, gave themselves up to the romance of their situation with all the enthusiasm of youth. They had traversed the Palatinate from Strasbourg to Bonn in the quality of artists, philosophers, and observers. When we have a scientific career before us, there are, in truth, at that age many natures within us; and even while making love or traveling about, an assistant-surgeon should be laying the foundations of his future fame and fortune. Accordingly, the pair had been carried away by the profound admiration that every well-read man must feel at the sight of the scenery of Swabia and the banks of the Rhine between Mayence and Cologne. They saw a vigorous and fertile country, an undulating green landscape full of strong contrasts and of memories of feudal times, and everywhere scarred by fire and sword. Louis XIV. and Turenne once before laid that fair land in ashes; heaps of ruins bear witness to the pride, or, it may be, to the prudence of the monarch of Versailles, who razed the wonderful castles which once were the glory of this part of Germany. You arrive at some conception of the German mind; you understand its dreaminess and its mysticism from this wonderful forestland of theirs, full of remains of the Middle Ages, picturesque, albeit in ruins.

"The two friends had made some stay in Bonn with two objects in view—scientific knowledge and pleasure. The grand hospital of the Gallo-Batavian army and of Augereau's

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division had been established in the Electoral palace itself, and thither the two novices had gone to see their comrades, to deliver letters of recommendation to their chiefs, and to make their first acquaintance with the life of army surgeons. But with the new impressions, there as elsewhere, they parted with some of their national prejudices, and discovered that France had no monopoly of beautiful public buildings and landscapes. The marble columns that adorn the Electoral palace took them by surprise; they admired the magnificence of German architecture and found fresh treasures of ancient and modern art at every step.

"Now and again in the course of their wanderings toward Andernach their way led them over some higher peak among the granite hills. Through a clear space in the forest, or a chasm in the rocks, they caught a glimpse of the Rhine, a picture framed in the gray stone, or in some setting of luxuriant trails of green leaves. Every valley, field-path, and forest was filled with autumn scents that conduce to musings and with signs of the aging of the year; the tree-tops were turning golden, taking warmer hues and shades of brown; the leaves were falling, but the sky was blue and cloudless overhead; the roads were dry, and shone like threads of gold across the country in the late afternoon sunlight.

"Half a league from Andernach the country through which the two friends were traveling lay in a silence as deep as if there were no war laying waste the beautiful land. They were following a goat track among the steep crags of bluish granite that rise like walls above the eddying Rhine, and before very long were descending the sloping sides of the ravine above the little town, nestling coyly at its foot on the river bank, its picturesque quay for the Rhine boatmen.

" 'Germany is a very beautiful country!' cried one of the two, Prosper Magnan by name, as he caught sight of the painted houses of Andernach lying close together like eggs in a basket, among the trees and flower-gardens.

"For a few minutes they looked at the high-pitched roofs with their projecting beams, at the balconies and wooden

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staircases of all those peaceful dwellings, and at the boats swaying in the current by the quay."

When M. Hermann mentioned the name of Prosper Magnan, my opposite neighbor, the army contractor, snatched up the decanter, poured himself out a glass of water, and drank it down at a gulp. This proceeding recalled my attention to him; I thought I saw a slight quiver in his hands and a trace of perspiration on his forehead.

"What is the army contractor's name?" I inquired of my gracious neighbor.

"His name is Taillefer," said she.

"Are you feeling unwell?" I exclaimed, as this unaccountable being turned pale.

"Not at all, not at all," he said, with a courteous gesture of acknowledgment. "I am listening," he said, with a nod to the rest of the party, for all eyes were turned at once upon him.

"I forget the other young man's name," said M. Hermann. "But, at any rate, from Prosper Magnan's confidences I learned that his friend was dark, lively, and rather thin. If you have no objection, I will call him Wilhelm for the sake of clearness in the story." And the good German took up his tale again, after baptizing a French assistant-surgeon with a German name, totally regardless of local color and of the demands of Romanticism.

"So by the time these two young fellows reached Andernach night had fallen; and they, fancying that it was too late to report themselves to their chiefs, make themselves known and obtain billets in a place already full of soldiers, made up their minds to spend their last night of freedom in an inn, about a hundred paces outside the town. They had seen it from the crags above, and had admired the warm colors of the house, heightened by the glow of the sunset. The whole building was painted red, and produced a piquant effect in the landscape, whether it was seen against the crowd of houses in the town, or as a mass of bright color against a background of forest trees, or a patch of scarlet by the gray water's edge.

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Doubtless the inn owed its external decoration, and consequently its name, to the whim of the builder in some forgotten time. The color had come to be literally a matter of custom to successive owners, for the inn had a name among the Rhine boatmen who frequented it. The sound of horses' hoofs brought the landlord of the Red Inn to the threshold.

"'*Pardieu!* gentlemen,' cried he, 'a little later you would have had to sleep out of doors like most of your countrymen bivouacking yonder at the other end of Andernach. The house is full. If you positively must have a bed to sleep in, I have only my own room to offer you. As for the horses, I can lay down some litter in a corner of the yard for them; my stables are full of christened men this day.—The gentlemen will be from France?' he went on after a brief pause.

"'From Bonn,' cried Prosper, 'and we have had nothing to eat since morning.'

"'Oh! as to victuals,' said the landlord, jerking his head, 'people come to the Red Inn for ten leagues round for wedding feasts. You shall have a banquet fit for a prince, fish from the Rhine! That tells you everything.'

"When they had given over their tired beasts into the host's care, they left him to shout in vain for the stable folk, and went into the public room of the inn. It was so full of dense white clouds blown from the pipes of a room full of smokers, that at first they could not make out what kind of company they had fallen among; but after they had sat for a while at a table, and put in practice the patience of traveled philosophers who know when it is useless to make a fuss, they gradually made out the inevitable accessories of a German inn. The stove, the clock, the tables, pots of beer and long pipes, loomed out through the tobacco smoke; so did the faces of the motley crew, Jews, Germans, and what not, with one or two rough boatmen thrown in.

"The epaulettes of a few French officers shone through the thick mist, and spurs and sabres clanked incessantly upon the flagstones. Some were playing at cards, the rest quarreled among themselves, or were silent, ate, or drank, and

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came or went. A stout little woman, who wore the black velvet cap, blue stomacher embroidered with silver, the pincushion, bunch of keys, silver clasps, and plaited hair of the typical German landlady (a costume made so familiar in all its details by a host of prints that it is too well known to need description), came to the two friends and soothed their impatience, while she stimulated their interest in their supper with very remarkable skill.

"Gradually the noise diminished, the travelers went off one by one, the clouds of tobacco smoke cleared away. By the time that the table was set for the assistant-surgeons, and the classic carp from the Rhine appeared, it was eleven o'clock, and the room was empty. Through the stillness of the night it was possible to hear faint noises or horses stamping or crunching their provender, the ripple of the Rhine, the vague indefinable sounds in an inn full of people when everyone has retired to rest. Doors and windows opened or shut; there was an inarticulate murmur of voices, or a name was called out in some room overhead. During this time of silence and of commotion, while the two Frenchmen were eating their supper and the landlord engaged in extolling Andernach, the meal, his Rhine wine, his wife, and the Republican army, for the benefit of his guests, the three heard, with a certain degree of interest, the hoarse shouts of boatmen and the rattling sound of a boat being moored alongside the quay. The innkeeper, doubtless accustomed to be hailed by the guttural cries of the boatmen, hurried out, and soon came in again with a short, stout man, a couple of the boat's crew following them with a heavy valise and several packages. As soon as the baggage was deposited in the room, the short man picked up his valise and seated himself without ceremony at the table opposite the two surgeons.

" 'You can sleep on board,' said he to the boatmen, 'as the inn is full. All things considered, that will be the best way.'

" 'All the provisions I have in the house are here before you, sir,' said the landlord, and he indicated the French-

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men's supper. 'I have not a crust of bread, and not so much as a bone——'

"'And no sauerkraut?'

"'Not so much as would fill my wife's thimble! As I had the honor of telling you just now, you can have no bed but the chair you are sitting on, and this is the only unoccupied room.'

"At these words the short personage glanced at the landlord, at the room, and at the two Frenchmen, caution and alarm equally visible in the expression of his countenance.

"At this point," said M. Hermann, interrupting himself, "I should tell you that we never knew this stranger's real name, nor his history; we found out from his papers that he came from Aix-la-Chapelle, that he had assumed the name of Walhenfer, and owned a rather large pin factory somewhere near Neuwied—that was all.

"He wore, like other manufacturers in that part of the world, an ordinary cloth overcoat, waistcoat and breeches of dark-green velvet, high boots, and a broad leather belt. His face was perfectly round, his manners frank and hearty, and during the evening he found it very difficult to disguise some inward apprehensions, or, it may be, cruel anxieties. The innkeeper always said that the German merchant was flying the country, and I learned later on that his factory had been burned down through one of the unlucky accidents so frequent in time of war. But in spite of the uneasy look that his face generally wore, its natural expression denoted good-humor and good-nature. He had good features, and a particularly noticeable personal trait was a thick neck, so white in contrast with a black cravat, that Wilhelm jokingly pointed it out to Prosper——"

Here M. Taillefer drank another glass of water.

"Prosper courteously invited the merchant to share their supper, and Walhenfer fell to without more ado, like a man who is conscious that he can repay a piece of civility. He set down his valise on the floor, put his feet upon it, took off his hat, drew his chair to the table, and laid down his gloves

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beside him, together with a pair of pistols, which he carried in his belt. The landlord quickly laid a cover for him, and the three began to satisfy their hunger silently enough.

"The room was so close and the flies so troublesome, that Prosper besought the landlord to open the window that looked out upon the quay to let in fresh air. This window was fastened by an iron bar that dropped into a socket on either side of the window frame, and for greater security, a nut fastened to each of the shutters received a bolt. It so happened that Prosper watched the landlord unfasten the window.

"But since I am going into these particulars," M. Hermann remarked, "I ought to describe the internal arrangements of the house; for the whole interest of the story depends on an accurate knowledge of the place.

"There were two entrance doors in the room where these three personages were sitting. One opened on to the road that followed the river bank to Andernach, and, as might be expected, just opposite the inn, there was a little jetty where the boat which the merchant had hired for his voyage was moored at that moment. The other door gave admittance to the inn-yard, a court shut in by very high walls, and at the moment full of horses and cattle, for human beings occupied the stables.

"The house door had been so carefully bolted and barred that, to save time, the landlord had opened the street door of the sitting-room to admit the merchant and the boatmen, and now, when he had opened the window at Prosper Magnan's instance, he set to work to shut this door, slipping the bolts and screwing the nuts.

"The landlord's bedroom, where the friends were to sleep, was next to the public room of the inn, and only separated from the kitchen, where the host and hostess were probably to pass the night, by a sufficiently thin partition wall. The maid-servant had just gone out to find a nook in some manger, or in the corner of a hay loft somewhere or other. It will be readily understood that the public room, the landlord's bed-

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room, and the kitchen were in a manner apart from the rest of the inn. The deep barking of two great dogs in the yard indicated that the house had vigilant and wakeful guardians.

"'How quiet it is, and what a glorious night!' said Wilhelm, looking out at the sky when the landlord had bolted the door. There was not a sound to be heard at the moment save the rippling of the water.

"'Gentlemen,' said the merchant, addressing the Frenchmen, 'allow me to offer you a bottle or two of wine to wash down your carp. A glass will refresh us after a tiring day. By the look of you and the condition of your clothes, I can see that, like myself, you have come a good way.'

"The two friends accepted the proposal, and the landlord went out through the kitchen to the cellar, doubtless situated beneath that part of the establishment. About the time that five venerable bottles appeared upon the table, the landlord's wife had finished serving the supper. She gave a housewife's glance over the dishes and round the room, assured herself that the travelers had everything they were likely to want, and went back to the kitchen. The four boon companions, for the host was asked to join the party, did not hear her go off to bed; but before long, in the pauses of the chat over the wine, there came an occasional very distinct sound of snoring from the loft above the kitchen where she was sleeping, a sound rendered still more resonant by reason of the thin plank floor. This made the guests smile, and the landlord smiled still more.

"Towards midnight, when there was nothing left on the table but cheese and biscuits, dried fruit, and good wine, the whole party, and the young Frenchmen more particularly, grew communicative. They talked about their country, their studies, and the war. After a while the conversation grew lively. Prosper Magnan drew tears to the merchant's eyes when, with a Picard's frankness and the simplicity of a kindly and affectionate nature, he began to imagine what his mother would be doing while he, her son, was here on the bank of the Rhine.

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"'It is just as if I can see her,' he said; 'she is reading the evening paper, the last thing at night! She will not forget me, I know; she is sure to say, "Where is my poor Prosper, I wonder?" Then if she has won a few sous at cards—of *your* mother perhaps,' he added, jogging Wilhelm's elbow—'she will be putting them in the big red jar, where she keeps the money she is saving up to buy those thirty acres that lie within her own little bit of land at Lescheville. The thirty acres will be worth something like sixty thousand francs. Good meadow land it is! Ah! if I were to have it some day, I would live all the rest of my life at Lescheville, and want nothing better! How often my father wanted those thirty acres and the nice little stream that winds along through the fields! And, after all, he died and could not buy the land. . . . I have played there many and many a time!'

"'M. Walhenfer, haven't you also your *hoc erat in votis*?' asked Wilhelm.

"'Yes, sir, yes! But it all came to me as it was, and now. . . .' the good man stopped short and said no more.

"'For my own part,' said the landlord, whose countenance was slightly flushed, 'I bought a bit of meadow last year that I had set my mind on these ten years past.'

"So they chatted on, as folk will talk when wine has unloosed their tongues, and struck up one of those travelers' friendships that we are little chary of making on a journey, in such a sort that when they rose to go to their room Wilhelm offered his bed to the merchant.

"'You can take the offer without hesitation,' he said, 'for Prosper and I can sleep together. It will not be the first time nor the last either, I expect. You are the oldest among us, and we ought to honor old age.'

"'Pooh!' said the landlord, 'there are several mattresses on our bed, one can be laid on the floor for you,' and he went to shut the window with the usual clatter caused by this precaution.

"'I accept your offer,' said the merchant, addressing Wilhelm. 'I confess,' he added, lowering his voice, and looking

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at the friends, 'that I wanted you to make it. I feel that I cannot trust my boatmen; and I am not sorry to find myself in the company of two decent young fellows, two French military men, moreover, for the night. I have a hundred thousand francs in gold and diamonds in that valise.'

"The two younger men received this incautious communication with a discreet friendliness that reassured the worthy German. The landlord helped his guests to shift one of the mattresses, and, when things had been arranged as comfortably as possible, wished them a good-night and went off to bed. The merchant and the surgeons joked each other about their pillows. Prosper put Wilhelm's case of surgical instruments, as well as his own, under the mattress, to raise the end and supply the place of a bolster, just as Walhenfer, in an access of extreme caution, bestowed his valise under his bolster.

" 'We are both going to sleep on our fortunes—you on your money, and I on my case of instruments! It remains to be seen whether my case will bring me in as much money as you have made.'

" 'You may hope so,' said the merchant. 'Honest work will accomplish most things, but you must have patience.'

"Before very long Walhenfer and Wilhelm fell asleep. But whether it was because his bed was too hard, or he himself was over-tired and wakeful, or through some unlucky mood of mind, Prosper Magnan lay broad awake. Imperceptibly his thoughts took an ill turn. He could think of nothing but that hundred thousand francs beneath the merchant's pillow. For him a hundred thousand francs was a vast fortune ready made. He began by laying out the money in endless ways, building castles in the air, as we are all apt to do with so much enjoyment just before we drop off to sleep, when indistinct and hazy ideas arise in our minds, and not seldom night and silence give a magical vividness to our thoughts.

"In these visions Prosper Magnan overtopped his mother's ambitions; he bought the thirty acres of meadow, and married a young lady in Beauvais, to whose hand he could not

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aspire at present owing to inequality of fortune. With this wealth he planned out a whole pleasant lifetime, saw himself the prosperous father of a family, rich, looked up to in the neighborhood, possibly even Mayor of Beauvais. The Picard head was on fire; he cast about for the means of realizing these dreams of his. With extraordinary warmth of imagination he set himself to plan out a crime, and gold and diamonds were the most vivid and distinct portion of a vision of the merchant's death; the glitter dazzled him. His heart beat fast. He had committed a crime, no doubt, by harboring such thoughts as these. The spell of the gold was upon him; his moral nature was intoxicated by insidious reasonings. He asked himself whether there was any reason why the poor German should live, and imagined how it would have been if he had never existed. To put it briefly, he plotted out a way to do the deed with complete impunity.

"The Austrians held the other bank of the Rhine; a boat lay there under the windows; there were boatmen there; he could cut the man's throat, fling him into the Rhine, escape with the valise through a casement, bribe the boatmen, and go over to the Austrian side. He even went so far as to count upon his surgeon's dexterity with the knife; he knew of a way of decapitating his victim before the sleeper could utter a single shriek . . ."

M. Taillefer wiped his forehead at this point, and again he drank a little water.

"Then Prosper Magnan rose—slowly and noiselessly. He assured himself that he had awakened nobody, dressed and went into the public room. Then, with the fatal lucidity of mind that suddenly comes at certain crises, with the heightened power of intuition and strength of will that is never lacking to criminals, or to prisoners in the execution of their designs, he unscrewed the iron bars, and drew them from their sockets, and set them against the wall without the slightest sound, hanging with all his weight on to the shutters lest they should creak as they turned on their hinges. In the pale moonlight he could dimly see the objects in the room where Wilhelm and Walhenfer were sleeping.

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"Then, he told me, he stopped short for a moment. His heart beat so hard and so heavily, that the sound seemed to ring through the room, and he stood like one dismayed as he heard it. He began to fear for his coolness; his hands shook, he felt as if he were standing on burning coals. But so fair a prospect depended upon the execution of his design, that he saw something like a providence in this dispensation of fate that had brought the merchant thither. He opened the window, went back to his room, took up his case, and looked through it for an instrument best adapted to his purpose.

" 'And when I stood by the bed' (he told me this), 'I asked God for His protection, unthinkingly.'

"He had just raised his arm, and was summoning all his strength for the blow, when something like a voice cried within him, and he thought he saw a light. He flung down the surgical instrument on his bed, fled into the next room, and stood at the window. A profound horror of himself came over him, and feeling how little he could trust himself, fearing to yield to the fascination that held him, he sprang quickly out of the window and walked along by the Rhine, acting as sentinel, as it were, before the inn. Again and again he walked restlessly to and from Andernach, often also his wanderings led him to the slope of the ravine which they had descended that afternoon to reach the inn; but so deep was the silence of the night, and so strong his dread of arousing the watch-dogs, that he kept away from the Red Inn, and lost sight altogether more than once of the window that he had left open. He tried to weary himself out, and so to induce sleep. Yet, as he walked to and fro under the cloudless sky, watching the brilliant stars, it may be that the pure night air and the melancholy lapping of the water wrought upon him, and restored him by degrees to moral sanity. Sober reason completed the work and dispelled that short-lived madness. His education, the precepts of religion, and, above all things (so he told me), visions of the homely life that he had led beneath his father's roof, got the better of his evil thoughts. He thought and pondered for long, his

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elbow resting on a boulder by the side of the Rhine; and when he turned to go in again, he could not only have slept, so he said, but have watched over millions of gold.

"When his honesty emerged strengthened and triumphant from that ordeal, he knelt in joy and ecstasy to thank God; he felt as happy, light-hearted, and content as on the day when he took the sacrament for the first time, and felt not unworthy of the angels because he had spent the day without sin in word, or thought, or deed.

"He went back again to the inn, shut the window without care to move noiselessly, and went to bed at once. Mind and body were utterly exhausted, and sleep overcame him. He had scarcely laid his head on the mattress before the dreamy drowsiness that precedes sound slumber crept over him; when the senses grow torpid, conscious life ebbs away, thought grows fragmentary, and the last communications of sense to the brain are like the impressions of a dream.

"'How close the air is!' said Prosper to himself. 'It is just as if I were breathing a damp mist . . .'

"Dimly he sought to account for this state of things by attributing it to the difference between the outside temperature in the pure country air and the closed room; but before long he heard a constantly recurring sound, very much like the slow drip of water from a leaking tap. On an impulse of panic terror, he thought of rising and calling the landlord, or the merchant, or Wilhelm; but, for his misfortune, he bethought himself of the wooden clock in the next room, fancied that the sound was the beat of the pendulum, and dropped off to sleep with this dim and confused idea in his head."

"Do you want some water, M. Taillefer?" asked the master of the house, seeing the banker take up the empty decanter mechanically.

M. Hermann went on with his story after the slight interruption of the banker's reply.

"The next morning," he went on, "Prosper Magnan was awakened by a great noise. It seemed to him that he had

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heard shrill cries, and he felt that violent nervous tremor which we experience when we wake to a painful sensation that began during slumber. The thing that takes place in us when we 'wake with a start,' to use the common expression, has been insufficiently investigated, though it presents interesting problems to physiological science. The terrible shock, caused it may be by the too sudden reunion of the two natures in us that are almost always apart while we sleep, is usually momentary, but it was not so for the unlucky young surgeon. The horror grew, and his hair bristled hideously all at once, when he saw a pool of blood between his own mattress and Walhenfer's bedstead. The unfortunate German's head was lying on the floor, the body was still on the bed, all this blood had drained from the neck. Prosper Magnan saw Walhenfer's eyes unclosed and staring, saw red on the sheets that he had slept in, and even on his own hands, saw his own surgeon's knife on the bed, and fainted away on the blood-stained floor.

"'I was punished already for my thoughts,' he said to me afterwards.

"When he came to himself again, he was sitting in a chair in the public room of the inn, a group of French soldiers round about him, and an inquisitive and interested crowd. He stared in dull bewilderment at a Republican officer who was busy taking down the depositions of several witnesses and drawing up an official report; he recognized the landlord and his wife, the two boatmen, and the maid-servant. The surgical instrument used by the murderer——"

Here M. Taillefer coughed, drew out his pocket-handkerchief, and wiped his forehead. His movements were so natural, that I alone noticed them; indeed, all eyes were fixed on M. Hermann with a kind of greedy interest. The army-contractor leaned his elbow on the table, propped his head on his right hand, and looked fixedly at Hermann. From that time forward I saw no involuntary signs of agitation nor of interest in the tale, but his face was grave and corpse-like; he looked just as he had done while he was playing with the decanter-stopper.

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"The surgical instrument used by the murderer lay on the table, beside the case with Prosper's pocket-book and papers. The crowd looked by turns at the young surgeon and at these convincing proofs of his guilt; he himself appeared to be dying; his dull eyes seemed to have no power of sight in them. A confused murmur outside made it evident that a crowd had gathered about the inn, attracted by the news of the murder, and perhaps by a wish to catch a sight of the criminal. The tramp of the sentries posted under the windows and the clanking of their weapons rose over the whispered talk of the populace. The inn itself was shut up, the courtyard was silent and deserted.

"The gaze of the officer who was drawing up the report was intolerable; Prosper Magnan felt some one grasp his hand; looked up to see who it was that stood by him among that unfriendly crowd, and recognized, by the uniform that he wore, the senior surgeon of the demi-brigade quartered in Andernach. So keen and merciless were those eyes, that the poor young fellow shuddered, and his head dropped on to the back of the chair. One of the men held vinegar for him to inhale, and Prosper regained consciousness at once; but his haggard eyes were so destitute of life and intelligence, that the senior surgeon felt his pulse, and spoke to the officer.

" 'Captain,' he said, 'it is impossible to examine the man just now——'

" 'Very well. Take him away,' returned the captain, cutting the surgeon short, and speaking to a corporal who stood behind the junior's chair.

" 'Confounded scoundrel!' the man muttered; 'try at least to hold up your head before these German beggars, to save the honor of the Republic.'

"Thus adjured, Prosper Magnan came to his senses, rose, and went forward a few paces; but when the door opened, when he felt the outer air, and saw the people crowding up, all his strength failed him, his knees bent under him, he tottered.

" 'The confounded sawbones deserves to be put an end to

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twice over!—March, can't you!' said the two men on either side of him, on whom he leaned.

"'Oh, the coward! the coward! Here he comes! here he comes! . . . There he is!'

"The words were uttered as by one voice, the clamorous voice of the mob who hemmed him in, insulting and reviling him at every step. During the time that it took to go from the inn to the prison, the trampling feet of the crowd and the soldiers who guarded him, the muttered talk of those about him, the sky above, the morning air, the streets of Andernach, the rippling murmur of the current of the Rhine, all reached him as dull, vague impressions, confused and dim, like all his experiences since his awakening. At times he thought that he had ceased to exist, so he told me afterwards.

"I myself was in prison just then," said M. Hermann, interrupting himself. "We are all enthusiasts at twenty. I was on fire to defend my country, and commanded a volunteer troop raised in and about Andernach. A short time previously, I managed to fall in one night with a French detachment of eight hundred men. There were two hundred of us at the most; my scouts had betrayed me. I was thrown into the prison at Andernach while they debated whether or no to have me shot by way of a warning to the country. The French, moreover, talked of reprisals, but the murder for which they had a mind to avenge themselves on me turned out to have been committed outside the Electorate. My father had obtained a reprieve of three days, to make application for my pardon to General Augereau, who granted it.

"So I saw Prosper Magnan as soon as he came into the prison at Andernach, and the first sight of him filled me with the deepest pity for him. Haggard, exhausted, and blood-stained though he was, there was a certain frankness in his face that convinced me of his innocence, and made a deep impression upon me. It was as if Germany stood there visibly before me—the prisoner with the long, fair hair and blue eyes, was for my imagination the very personification of the prostrate Fatherland,—this was no murderer, but a victim. As he

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went past my window, a sad, bitter smile lit up his face for a moment, as if a transitory gleam of sanity crossed a disordered brain. Such a smile would surely not be seen on a murderer's lips. When I next saw the turnkey, I asked him about his new prisoner.

"'He hasn't said a word since he went into his cell. He sits there with his head on his hands, and sleeps or thinks about his trouble. From what I hear the Frenchmen saying, they will settle his case to-morrow, and he will be shot within twenty-four hours.'

"That evening I lingered a little under his windows during the short time allowed for exercise in the prison yard. We talked together, and he told me very simply the story of his ill-luck, giving sufficiently straightforward answers to my different questions. After that conversation I no longer doubted his innocence. I asked and obtained the favor of spending a few hours in his company, and saw him in this way several times. The poor boy let me into the secret of his thoughts without reserve. In his own opinion, he was at once innocent and guilty. He remembered the hideous temptation which he had found strength to resist, and was afraid that he had committed the murder planned while he was awake in an access of somnambulism.

"'But how about your companion?' said I.

"'Oh, Wilhelm is incapable!——' he cried vehemently. He did not even finish the sentence. I grasped his hand at the warm-hearted outburst, so fraught with youth and virtue.

"'I expect he was frightened when he woke,' he said; 'he must have lost his presence of mind and fled——'

"'Without waking you?' I asked. 'Why, in that case your defence is soon made, for Walhenfer's valise will not have been stolen.'

"All at once he burst into tears.

"'Oh, yes, yes!' he cried; 'I am not guilty. I cannot have killed him. I remember the dreams I had. I was at school, playing at prisoners-base. I could not have cut his throat while I was dreaming of running about.'

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"But in spite of the gleams of hope that quieted his mind somewhat at times, he still felt crushed by the weight of remorse. There was no blinking the fact he had raised his arm to strike the blow. He condemned himself, and considered that he was morally guilty after committing the crime in imagination.

"'And yet, I am not a bad fellow,' he cried. 'Oh, poor mother! Perhaps just now she is happily playing at cards with her friends in the little tapestried room at home. If she knew that I had so much as raised my hand to take another man's life—Oh! it would kill her! And I am in prison, and accused of murder! If I did not kill the man, I shall certainly be the death of my mother!'

"He shed no tears as he spoke. In a wild fit of frenzy, not uncommon among Picards, he sprang up, and if I had not forcibly restrained him, would have dashed his head against the wall.

"'Wait until you have been tried,' I said. 'You will be acquitted; you are innocent. And your mother——'

"'My mother,' he cried wildly; 'my mother will hear that I have been accused of murder, that is the main point. You always hear things like that in little places, and my poor mother will die of grief. Besides, I am not innocent. Do you care to know the whole truth! I feel that I have lost the virginity of my conscience.'

"With those terrible words, he sat down, folded his arms across his chest, bowed his head, and fixed his eyes gloomily on the floor. Just then the turnkey came to bid me return to my cell; but loath to leave my companion when his discouragement seemed at its blackest, I clasped him in a friendly embrace. 'Be patient,' I said, 'perhaps it will all come right. If an honest man's opinion can silence your doubts, I tell you this—that I esteem you and love you. Accept my friendship, and repose on my heart, if you cannot feel at peace with your own.'

"On the following day, about nine o'clock, a corporal and four fusiliers came for the assistant surgeon. I heard the

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sound of the soldiers' footsteps, and went to the window; our eyes met as he crossed the court. Never shall I forget the glance fraught with so many thoughts and forebodings, nor the resignation and indescribably sad and melancholy sweetness in his expression. In that dumb swift transference of thought, my friend conveyed his testament to me; he left his lost life to the one friend who was beside him at the last.

"That night must have been very hard to live through, a very lonely night for him; but perhaps the pallor that overspread his face was a sign of a newly acquired stoicism, based on a new view of himself. Perhaps he felt purified by remorse, and thought to expiate his sin in this anguish and shame. He walked with a firm step; and I noticed that he had removed the accidental stains of blood that soiled his clothing the night before.

"'Unluckily I stained my hands while I was asleep; I always was an uneasy sleeper,' he had said, a dreadful despair in the tones of his voice.

"I was told that he was about to be tried by a court-martial. The division was to go forward in two days' time, and the commandant of the demi-brigade meant to try the criminal on the spot before leaving Andernach.

"While that court-martial was sitting, I was in an agony of suspense. It was noon before they brought Prosper Magnan back to prison. I was taking my prescribed exercise when he came; he saw me, and rushed into my arms.

"'I am lost!' he said. 'Lost beyond hope! Every one here must look on me as a murderer——'

"Then he raised his head proudly. 'This injustice has completely given me back my innocence,' he said. 'If I had lived, my life must always have been troubled, but my death shall be without reproach. But is there anything beyond?'

"The whole eighteenth century spoke in that sudden questioning. He was absorbed in thought.

"'But what did you tell them? What did they ask you?' I cried. 'Did you not tell them the simple truth as you told it to me?'

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"He gazed at me for a minute, then after the brief, dreadful pause, he answered with a feverish readiness of speech:

" 'First of all they asked me: "Did you go out of the inn during the night?"—"Yes," I told them.—"How did you get out?"—I turned red, and answered, "Through the window." —"Then you must have opened it?"—"Yes," I said.—"You set about it very cautiously; the landlord heard nothing!"— I was like one stupefied all the time. The boatmen swore that they had seen me walking, sometimes towards Andernach, sometimes towards the forest. I went to and fro many times, they said. I had buried the gold and diamonds. As a matter of fact the valise has not been found. Then, the whole time, I myself was struggling against remorse. Whenever I opened my mouth to speak, a merciless voice seemed to cry, *"You meant to do it!"* Everything was against me, even myself! . . . They wanted to know about my comrade, and I completely exonerated *him*. Then they said, "One of you four must be guilty—you or your comrade, the innkeeper or his wife. All the doors and windows were shut fast this morning!" When they said that,' he went on, 'I had no voice, no strength, no spirit left in me. I was more sure of my friend than of myself; I saw very well that they thought us both equally guilty of the murder, and I was the clumsier one of the two. I tried to explain the thing by somnambulism; I tried to clear my friend; then I got muddled, and it was all over with me. I read my sentence in the judges' eyes. Incredulous smiles stole across their faces. That is all. The suspense is over. I am to be shot to-morrow—— I do not think of myself now,' he said, 'but of my poor mother.'

"He stopped short and looked up to heaven. He shed no tears; his eyes were dry and contracted with pain.

"Frédéric! . . .

"Ah! I remember now! The other one was called Frédéric . . . Frédéric! Yes, I am sure that was the name," M. Hermann exclaimed triumphantly.

I felt the pressure of my fair neighbor's foot; she made a sign to me, and looked across at M. Taillefer. The sometime

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army-contractor's hand drooped carelessly over his eyes, but through the fingers we thought we saw a smouldering blaze in them.

"Eh?" she said in my ear, "and now suppose that his name is Frédéric?"

I gave the lady a side glance of entreaty to be silent. Hermann went on with his tale.

"'It is cowardly of Frédéric to leave me to my fate. He must have been afraid. Perhaps he is hiding in the inn, for both our horses were there in the yard that morning.—What an inexplicable mystery it is!' he added, after a pause. 'Somnambulism, somnambulism! I never walked in my sleep but once in my life, and then I was not six years old. And I am to go out of this,' he went on, striking his foot against the earth, 'and take with me all the friendship that there is in the world. Must I die twice over, doubting the friendship that began when we were five years old, and lasted through our school life and our student days! Where is Frédéric?'

"The tears filled his eyes. We cling more closely to a sentiment than to our life, it seems!

"'Let us go in again,' he said; 'I would rather be in my cell. I don't mean them to see me crying. I shall go bravely to my death, but I cannot play the hero in season and out of season, and I confess that I am sorry to leave my life, my fair life, and my youth. I did not sleep last night; I remembered places about my home when I was a child; I saw myself running about in the meadows, perhaps it was the memories of those fields that led to my ruin.—I had a future before me' (he interrupted himself). 'A dozen men, a sub-lieutenant who will cry, "Ready! present! fire!" a roll of drums, and disgrace! that is my future now! Ah! there is a God, there is a God, or all this would be too nonsensical.'

"Then he grasped my arm, put his arms about me, and held me tightly to him.

"'Ah! you are the last human soul to whom I can pour out my soul. *You* will be free again! You will see your mother! I do not know whether you are rich or poor, but no matter for that, you are all the world for me. . . . They

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cannot keep the fighting up for ever. Well and good then, when they make peace, go to Beauvais. If my mother survives the disastrous news of my death, you will find her out and tell her "He was innocent," to comfort her. She will believe you,' he went on. 'I shall write to her as well, but you will carry my last look to her; you shall tell her how that you were the last friend whom I embraced before I died. Ah! how she will love you, my poor mother, you who have stood my friend at the last!' He was silent for a moment or two, the burden of his memories seemed too heavy for him to bear. 'Here they are all strangers to me,' he said, 'the other surgeons and the men, and they all shrink from me in horror. But for you, my innocence must remain a secret between me and heaven.'

"I vowed to fulfil his last wishes as a sacred charge. He felt that my heart went out to him, and was touched by my words. A little later the soldiers came back to take him before the court-martial again. He was doomed.

"I know nothing of the formalities or circumstances that attend a sentence of this kind; I do not know whether there is any appeal, nor whether the young surgeon's defence was made according to rule and precedent, but he prepared to go to his death early on the morrow, and spent that night in writing to his mother.

" 'We shall both be set free to-day,' he said, smiling, when I went the next day to see him. 'The general has signed your pardon, I hear.'

"I said nothing, and gazed at him to engrave his features on my memory.

"A look of loathing crossed his face, and he said, 'I have been a miserable coward! All night long I have been praying the very walls for mercy,' and he looked round his cell. 'Yes, yes,' he went on, 'I howled with despair, I rebelled against this, I have been through the most fearful inward conflict. . . . I was alone! . . . Now I am thinking of what others will say of me—Courage is like a garment that we put on. I must go decently to my death. . . . And so . . .' "

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II.

A DOUBLE RETRIBUTION

"Oh! do not tell us any more!" cried the girl who had asked for the story, cutting short the Nuremberger. "I want to live in suspense, and to believe that he was saved. If I were to know to-night that they shot him, I should not sleep. You must tell me the rest to-morrow."

We rose. M. Hermann offered his arm to my fair neighbor, who asked as she took it, "They shot him, did they not?"

"Yes. I was there."

"What, monsieur, you could——"

"He wished it, madame. It is something very ghastly to attend the funeral of a living man, your own friend who is not guilty of the crime laid to his charge. The poor young fellow never took his eyes off me. He seemed to have no life but mine left. 'He wished,' he said, 'that I should bear his last sigh to his mother.'"

"Well, and did you see her?"

"After the Peace of Amiens I went to France to take the glad tidings 'He was innocent!' That pilgrimage was like a sacred duty laid upon me. But Mme. Magnan was dead, I found; she had died of consumption. I burned the letter I had brought for her, not without deep emotion. Perhaps you will laugh at my German high-flown sentimentality; but for me there was a tragedy most sublimely sad in the eternal silence which was about to swallow up those farewells uttered in vain from one grave to another grave, and heard by none, like the cry of some traveler in the desert surprised by a beast of prey."

Here I broke in with a "How if some one were to bring you face to face with one of the men in this drawing-room, and say, 'There is the murderer!' would not that be another tragedy? And what would you do?"

M. Hermann took up his hat and went.

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"You are acting like a young man, and very thoughtlessly," said the lady. "Just look at Taillefer; there he sits in a low chair by the fire, Mademoiselle Fanny is handing him a cup of coffee; he is smiling. How could a murderer display such quiet self-possession as that, after a story that must have been torture to him. He looks quite patriarchal, does he not?"

"Yes; but just ask him if he has been with the army in Germany!" I exclaimed.

"Why not?" and with the audacity rarely lacking in womankind when occasion tempts, or curiosity gets the better of her, my fair neighbor went across to the army-contractor.

"Have you been in Germany, M. Taillefer?" quoth she.

Taillefer all but dropped his saucer.

"I, madame?—No, never."

"Why, what is that you are saying, Taillefer?" protested the banker, chiming in. "You were in the Wagram campaign, were you not—on the victualing establishment?"

"Oh yes!" answered Taillefer; "I was there, that once."

"You are wrong about him; he is a good sort of man," decided the lady when she came back to me.

"Very well," said I to myself, "before this evening is over I will drive the murderer out of the mire in which he is hiding."

There is a phenomenon of consciousness that takes place daily beneath our eyes, so commonplace that no one notices it, and yet there are astounding depths beneath it. Two men meet in a drawing-room who have some cause to disdain or to hate each other; perhaps one of them knows something which is not to the credit of the other; perhaps it is a condition of things that is kept a secret; perhaps one of them is meditating a revenge; but both of them are conscious of the gulf that divides them, or that ought to divide them. Before they know it, they are watching each other and absorbed in each other; some subtle emanation of their thought seems to distil from every look and gesture; they have a magnetic in-

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fluence. Nor can I tell which has the more power of attraction—revenge or crime, hatred or contempt. Like some priest who cannot consecrate the house where an evil spirit abides, the two are ill at ease and suspicious; one of them, it is hard to say which, is polite, and the other sullen; one of them turns pale or red, and the other trembles, and it often happens that the avenger is quite as cowardly as the victim. For very few of us have the nerve to cause pain, even if it is necessary pain, and many a man passes over a matter or forgives from sheer hatred of fuss or dread of making a tragical scene.

With this inter-susceptibility of minds, and apprehensiveness of thought and feeling, there began a mysterious struggle between the army-contractor and me. Ever since my interruption of M. Hermann's story he had shunned my eyes. Perhaps in like manner he looked none of the party in the face. He was chatting now with the inexperienced Fanny, the banker's daughter; probably, like all criminals, he felt a longing to take shelter with innocence, as if the mere proximity of innocence might bring him peace for a little. But though I stood on the other side of the room, I still listened to all that he said; my direct gaze fascinated him. When he thought he could glance at me in turn, unnoticed, our eyes met, and his eyelids fell directly. Taillefer found this torture intolerable, and hastened to put a stop to it by betaking himself to a card-table. I backed his opponent, hoping to lose my money. It fell out as I had wished. The other player left the table, I cut in, and the guilty man and I were now face to face.

"Monsieur," I said, as he dealt the cards, "will you be so good as to begin a fresh score?" He swept his counters from right to left somewhat hastily. The lady, my neighbor at dinner, passed by; I gave her a significant glance.

"M. Frédéric Taillefer," I asked, addressing my opponent, "are you related to a family in Beauvais with whom I am well acquainted?"

"Yes, sir." He let the cards fall, turned pale, hid his face

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in his hands, begged one of his backers to finish the game for him, and rose.

"It is too warm here," he gasped; "I am afraid . . ."

He did not finish his sentence. An expression of horrible anguish suddenly crossed his face, and he hurried out of the room; the master of the house followed him with what appeared to be keen anxiety. My neighbor and I looked at each other, but her face was overcast by indescribable sadness; there was a tinge of bitterness in it.

"Is your behavior very merciful?" she asked, as I rose from the card-table, where I had been playing and losing. She drew me into the embrasure of the window as she spoke. "Would you be willing to accept the power of reading all hearts if you could have it? Why interfere with man's justice or God's? We may escape the one; we shall never escape the other. Is the prerogative of a President of a Court of Assize so enviable? And you have all but done the executioner's office as well——"

"After sharing and stimulating my curiosity," I said, "you are lecturing me!"

"You have made me think," she answered.

"So it is to be peace to scoundrels, and woe to the unfortunate, is it? Let us down on our knees and worship gold! But shall we change the subject?" I said with a laugh. "Please look at the young lady who is just coming into the room."

"Well?"

"I met her three days ago at a ball at the Neapolitan embassy, and fell desperately in love. For pity's sake, tell me who she is. No one could tell me——"

"That is Mlle. Victorine Taillefer!"

Everything swam before my eyes; I could scarcely hear the tones of the speaker's voice.

"Her stepmother brought her home only a while ago from the convent where she has been finishing her education somewhat late. . . . For a long time her father would not recognize her. She comes here to-day for the first time. She is very handsome—and very rich!"

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A sardonic smile went with the words. Just as she spoke, we heard loud cries that seemed to come from an adjoining room; stifled though they were, they echoed faintly through the garden.

"Is not that M. Taillefer's voice?" I asked. We both listened intently to the sounds, and fearful groans reached our ears. Just then our hostess hurried towards us and closed the window.

"Let us avoid scenes," she said to us. "If Mlle. Taillefer were to hear her father, it would be quite enough to send her into a fit of hysterics."

The banker came back to the drawing-room, looked for Victorine, and spoke a few low words in her ear. The girl sprang at once towards the door with an exclamation, and vanished. This produced a great sensation. The card-parties broke up; every one asked his neighbor what had happened. The buzz of talk grew louder, and groups were formed.

"Has M. Taillefer——?" I began.

"Killed himself?" put in my sarcastic friend. "You would wear mourning for him with a light heart, I can see."

"But what can have happened to him?"

"Poor man!" (it was the lady of the house who spoke) "he suffers from a complaint—I cannot recollect the name of it, though M. Brousson has told me about it often enough—and he has just had a seizure."

"What kind of complaint is it?" asked an examining magistrate suddenly.

"Oh, it is something dreadful," she answered; "and the doctors can do nothing for him. The agony must be terrible. Taillefer had a seizure, I remember, once, poor man, when he was staying with us in the country; I was obliged to go to a neighbor's house so as not to hear him; his shrieks are fearful; he tries to kill himself; his daughter had to have him put into a strait-waistcoat and tied down to his bed. Poor man! he says there are live creatures in his head gnawing his brain; it is a horrible, sawing, shooting pain that throbs through every nerve. He suffers so fearfully with his

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head that he did not feel the blisters that they used to apply at one time to draw the inflammation; but M. Brousson, his present doctor, forbade this; he says that it is nervous inflammation, and put leeches on the throat, and applies laudanum to the head; and, indeed, since they began this treatment the attacks have been less frequent; he seldom has them oftener than once a year, in the late autumn. When he gets over one of these seizures, Taillefer always says that he would rather be broken on the wheel than endure such agony again."

"That looks as if he suffered considerably!" said a stockbroker, the wit of the party.

"Oh! last year he very nearly died," the lady went on. "He went alone to his country-house on some urgent business; there was no one at hand perhaps, for he lay stiff and stark, like one dead, for twenty-two hours. They only saved his life by a scalding hot bath."

"Then is it some kind of tetanus?" asked the stockbroker.

"I do not know," returned she. "He has had the complaint nearly thirty years; it began while he was with the army. He says that he had a fall on a boat, and a splinter got into his head, but Brousson hopes to cure him. People say that in England they have found out a way of treating it with prussic acid, and that you run no risks——"

A shrill cry, louder than any of the preceding ones, rang through the house. The blood ran cold in our veins.

"There!" the banker's wife went on, "that is just what I was expecting every moment. It makes me start in my chair and creep through every nerve. But—it is an extraordinary thing!—poor Taillefer, suffering such unspeakable pain as he does, never runs any risk of his life! He eats and drinks as usual whenever he has a little respite from that ghastly torture. . . . Nature has such strange freaks. Some German doctor once told him that it was a kind of gout in the head; and Brousson's opinion was pretty much the same."

I left the little group about our hostess and went out with Mlle. Taillefer. A servant had come for her. She was crying.

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"Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!" she sobbed; "how can my father have offended heaven to deserve such suffering as this? . . . So kind as he is."

I went downstairs with her, and saw her into the carriage; her father was lying doubled up inside it. Mlle. Taillefer tried to smother the sound of her father's moaning by covering his mouth with a handkerchief. Unluckily, he saw me, and his drawn face seemed further distorted, a scream of agony rent the air, he gave me a dreadful look, and the carriage started.

That dinner party and the evening that followed it was to exercise a painful influence on my life and on my views. Honor and my own scruples forbade me to connect myself with a murderer, no matter how good a husband and father he might be, and so I must needs fall in love with Mlle. Taillefer. It was well-nigh incredible how often chance drew me to visit at houses where I knew I might meet Victorine. Again and again, when I had pledged myself to renounce her society, the evening would find me hovering about her. The pleasures of this life were immense. It gave the color of an illicit passion to this unforbidden love, and a chimerical remorse filled up the measure of my bliss. I scorned myself when I greeted Taillefer, if by accident he was with his daughter; but, after all, I bowed to him.

Unluckily, in fact, Victorine, being something more than a pretty girl, was well read, charming, and gifted in no small degree, without being in the least a blue stocking, without the slightest taint of affectation. There is a certain reserve in her light talk, and a pensive graciousness about her that no one could resist. She liked me, or, at any rate, she allowed me to think so; there was a certain smile that she kept for me; for me the tones of her voice grew sweeter still. Oh! she cared about me, but she worshiped her father; she would praise his kindness to me, his gentleness, his various perfections, and all her praises were like so many daggers thrust into my heart.

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At length I all but became an accessory after the fact, an accomplice in the crime which had laid the foundation of the wealth of the Taillefers. I was fain to ask for Victorine's hand. I fled. I traveled abroad. I went to Germany and to Andernach. But I came back again, and Victorine was looking thinner and paler than her wont. If she had been well and in good spirits, I should have been safe; but now the old feeling for her was rekindled with extraordinary violence.

Fearing lest my scruples were degenerating into monomania, I resolved to convene a Sanhedrim of consciences that should not have been tampered with, and so to obtain some light on this problem of the higher morality and philosophy. The question had only become more complex since my return.

So the day before yesterday I assembled those among my friends whom I looked upon as notably honest, scrupulous, and honorable. I asked two Englishmen, a secretary to the Embassy and a Puritan; a retired Minister, in the character of matured worldly wisdom; a few young men still under the illusions of inexperiences; a priest, an elderly man; my old guardian, a simple-hearted being, who gave me the best account of his management of my property that ever trustee has been known to give in the annals of the Palais; an advocate, a notary, and a judge,—in short, all social opinions were represented, and all practical wisdom. We had begun by a good dinner, good talk, and a deal of mirth; and over the dessert I told my story plainly and simply (suppressing the name of my lady-love), and asked for sound counsel.

"Give me your advice," I said to my friends as I came to an end. "Go thoroughly into the question as if it were a point of law. I will have an urn and billiard-balls brought round, and you shall vote for or against my marriage, the secrecy of the ballot shall be scrupulously observed."

Deep silence prevailed all at once. Then the notary declined to act.

"There is a contract to draw up," he alleged.

Wine had had a quieting effect on my guardian; indeed,

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it clearly behoved me to find a guardian for *him* if he was to reach his home in safety.

"I see how it is!" I said to myself. "A man who does not give me an opinion is telling me pretty forcibly what I ought to do."

There was a general movement round the table. A landowner, who had subscribed to a fund for putting a headstone to General Foy's grave and providing for his family, exclaimed:

" 'Even, as virtue, crime hath its degrees.' "

"The babbler," said the Minister in a low voice, as he nudged my elbow.

"Where is the difficulty?" asked a duke, whose property consisted of lands confiscated from Protestants after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The advocate rose to his feet.

"In law," opined the mouthpiece of Justice, "the case before us presents no difficulty whatever. Monsieur le Duc is right! Is there not a statute of limitations? Begin to inquire into the origins of a fortune, and where should we all of us be? This is a matter of conscience, and not of law. If you must drag the case before some tribunal, the confessional is the proper place in which to hear it."

And the Code incarnate, having said his say, sat down and drank a glass of champagne. The man intrusted with the interpretation of the Gospel, the good priest, spoke next.

"God has made us weak," he said with decision. "If you love the criminal's heiress, marry her; but content yourself with her mother's property, and give her father's money to the poor."

"Why, in all likelihood the father only made a great match because he had made money first," cried one of the pitiless quibblers that you meet with everywhere. "And it is just the same with every little bit of good fortune—it all came of his crime!"

"The fact that the matter can be discussed is enough to decide it! There are some things which a man cannot weigh

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and ponder," cried my guardian, thinking to enlighten the assembly by this piece of drunken gravity.

"True!" said the secretary to the Embassy.

"True!" exclaimed the priest, each meaning quite differently.

A doctrinaire, who escaped being elected by a bare hundred and fifty votes out of a hundred and fifty-five, rose next.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this phenomenal manifestation of the intellectual nature is one of the most strongly marked instances of an exception to the normal condition of things, the rules which society obeys. The decision, therefore, on an abnormal case should be an extemporaneous effort of the conscience, a sudden conception, a delicate discrimination of the inner consciousness, not unlike the flashes of insight that constitute perception in matters of taste. . . . Let us put it to the vote."

"Yes, let us put it to the vote," cried the rest of the party.

Each was provided with two billiard-balls—one white, the other red. White, the color of virginity, was to proscribe marriage; red to count in favor of it. My scruples prevented me from voting. My friends being seventeen in number, nine made a decisive majority. We grew excited and curious as each dropped his ball into the narrow-mouthed wicker basket, which holds the numbered balls when players draw for their places at pool, for there was a certain novelty in this process of voting by ballot on a nice point of conduct. When the basket was turned out there were nine white balls. To me this did not come as a surprise; but it occurred to me to count up the young men of my own age among this Court of Appeal. There were exactly nine of these casuists; one thought had been in all their minds.

"Aha!" I said to myself, "there was a unanimous feeling against the marriage in their minds, and a no less unanimous verdict in favor of it among the rest! Here is a fix, and how am I to get out of it?"

"Where does the father-in-law live?" one of my schoolfellows, less crafty than the rest, asked carelessly.

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"There is no longer a father-in-law in the case!" I exclaimed. "A while ago my conscience spoke sufficiently plainly to make your verdict superfluous. And if it speaks more uncertainly to-day, here are the inducements that led me to waver. Here is the tempter—this letter that I received two months ago;" and I drew a card from my pocket-book and held it up.

"You are requested to be present," so it ran, *"at the funeral and burial service of*

M. Jean-Frédéric Taillefer

of the firm of Taillefer and Company, sometime contractor of provisions to the Army, late Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and of the Order of the Golden Spur, Captain of the First Company of Grenadiers of the National Guard, Paris: who died on May 1st, at his house in the Rue Joubert. The interment will take place," and so forth, and so forth.
"On behalf of," and so forth.

"What am I to do now?" I continued. "I will just put the question roughly before you. There is unquestionably a pool of blood on Mlle. Taillefer's estates. Her father's property is one vast *Aceldama*. . . . Granted! But, then, Prosper Magnan has no representatives, and I could not find any traces of the family of the pin-maker who was murdered that night at Andernach. To whom should the fortune be returned? And ought it all to be returned? Have I any right to betray a secret discovered by accident, to add a severed human head to an innocent girl's marriage portion, to give her ugly dreams, to destroy her pleasant illusions, to kill the father she loved a second time, by telling her that there is a dark stain on all her wealth?

"I have borrowed a *Dictionary of Cases of Conscience* from an old ecclesiastic, and found therein no solution whatever of my doubts. Can you make a religious foundation for the

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souls of Prosper Magnan and Walhenfer and Taillefer now midway through this nineteenth century of ours? And as for endowing a charitable institution or awarding periodic prizes to virtue—most of our charitable institutions appear to me to be harboring scoundrels, and the prize of virtue would fall to the greatest rogues.

"And not only so. Would these investments, more or less gratifying to vanity, be any reparation? And is it my place to make any? Then I am in love, passionately in love. My love has come to be my life. If, without any apparent reason, I propose that a young girl, accustomed to splendor and elegance, and a life abundant in all the luxuries art can devise, a girl who indolently enjoys Rossini's music at the Bouffons,—if to her I should propose that she should rob herself of fifteen hundred thousand francs for the benefit of aged imbeciles and problematical scrofula patients, she would laugh and turn her back upon me, or her confidante would take me for a wag who makes jokes in poor taste. If in an ecstasy of love I extol the charms of humble life in a cottage by the Loire, if I ask her to give up, for my sake, her life in Paris, it would be a virtuous life to begin with, and probably would end in a sad experience for me, for I should lose the girl's heart; she is passionately fond of dancing and of pretty dresses, and, for the time being, of me. Enter some smart stripling of an officer with a nicely curled moustache, who shall play the piano, rave about Byron, and mount a horse gracefully, and I shall be supplanted. What is to be done? Gentlemen, advise me, for pity's sake?"

Then one of the party, who hitherto had not breathed a word, the Englishman with a Puritanical cast of face, not unlike the father of Jeanie Deans, shrugged his shoulders.

"Idiot that you were," he said. "What made you ask him if he came from Beauvais?"

PARIS, *May* 1881.

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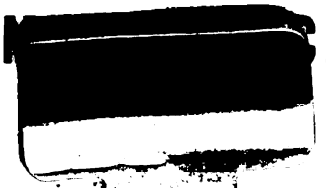

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